

NATURE

BOOK GUIDE

VOL. 2 ISSUE 4
SUMMER 2024

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READING FOR FUN

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

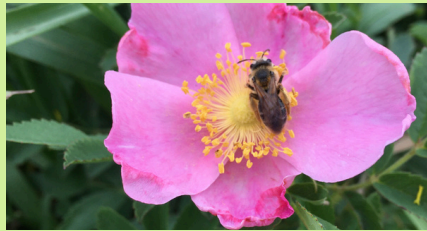
READING FOR INSIGHT

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

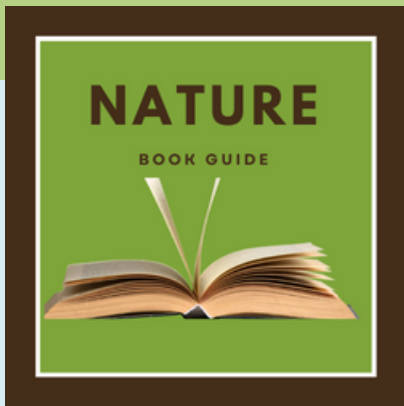
READING FOR CHANGE

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

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Welcome, Readers!

Now that SUMMER is here, I find myself under the shade of a favorite tree with a book enjoying the most relaxing reading days of the year. I'm so glad you've found our *Guide* of great books about nature and climate and hope our team's recommendations contribute to a great season of reading.

I call my local library the "House of Curiosity" and while I love to lose myself in a stroll through the stacks, I know it can be hard to find adventure memoirs in the biography section, or nature-oriented novels on the fiction shelves. And not everyone has the time to wander through the library. That's how we hope to help: in this *Nature Book Guide*, our Book Recommendation Panel members write about the books they love. Their recommendations will take you places you may not be able to visit -- the isolated dunes of Cape Cod in the 1920s, the mountains of the Italian Alps, the rainforest of the Amazon, or in the wilds of Yellowstone.

In this issue, we're thrilled to present interviews with two authors --- Ben Goldfarb and Suzanne Simpson. Simpson, the author of *Wild Houston*, is interviewed by panelist James Stancil and offers great tips for finding wild places in any city.



Ben Goldfarb's interview is about his newest work -- *Crossings: How Road Ecology is Shaping the Future of our Planet*. It is fascinating and sobering read, with a spirited focus on innovative solutions. We found ourselves wanting to join one of the civic science volunteer opportunities Goldfarb describes -- Monarch Watch, the Otter Project, or the Harborton Frog Shuttle -- and we think you might, too.

There's a quote by Roisin Taylor, Co-Director for UK Youth for Nature, that guides our work: "**Sometimes we forget that as individuals fighting for change, something as simple as recommending a book you loved that gives someone a connection to the natural world can be as powerful as being out on the streets marching with others.**" We know the planet needs our help, and it needs engaged, informed readers as its advocates. We love the books we're recommending, and we hope you do, too.

Beth Nobles
FOUNDER/EDITOR

As a high school student in the Youth Conservation Corps, Beth built trails and trail bridges in 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 retiring 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 the *Nature Book Guide* was another effort to do the same.



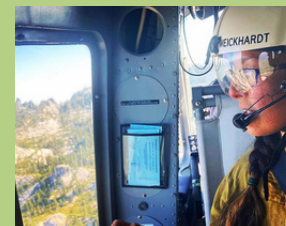
Book Recommendation Panel Members

Summer 2024 Contributors

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.



Adrianna Weickhardt, Natural Resource Specialist, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Previously, Adrianna served as Fire Prevention Technician with the US Forest Service in the Cascade Mountains of central Oregon. Worked 10 years in outdoor education/interpretation and natural resource management in State and National Parks. Her Masters studies examined the social factors that shape a fire adapted community and those that impact the development of effective community wildfire protection plans.



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.



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.



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.



James P. Stancil II, is an educator and volunteer exposing new audiences to nature, conservation, ecology, and the joy and healing power of all things outdoors. He uses books as a critical tool and has formed a nonprofit organization promoting media literacy, digital citizenship, and the joy of reading in the Houston community and beyond. His Nature by the Book organization will conduct a program this fall (in a Houston REI!) on *Shopping All the Way to the Woods: How the Outdoor Industry Sold Nature to America*.



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). She has worked in sustainable food and agriculture for over 40 years, most recently helping to develop the EcoCertified® program, a nonprofit collaboration among fruit growers, marketers, and scientists to support ecological orchard practices for local fruit production in the US. She's currently learning about heritage apples in Iowa, Maine and Indian-occupied Kashmir.



Laura Mills, Writer and nature enthusiast from Houston, Texas. Previously, she worked for the local green space organization, Buffalo Bayou Partnership, and she spent 5 years slinging books at Brazos Bookstore. In her spare time, she enjoys painting, exploring urban nature, and photographing clouds. She holds a Bachelor's degree in English and Creative Writing from Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.



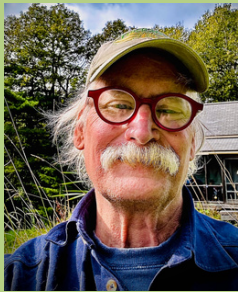


Noha Shawki, who grew up in Cairo, Egypt, is currently a Professor in the Department of Politics and Government at Illinois State University (ISU). Her areas of teaching and research include international relations, global governance, transnational activism and transnational social movements, with a substantive focus on global justice, human rights and sustainability. She has a special interest in transnational social movements that seek to bring about sustainability transitions. At ISU, she worked with colleagues from across campus to create the Center for a Sustainable Water Future and the Water Sustainability minor.

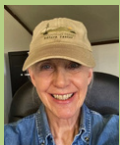
Guest Panelists



Tiara Chapman is the Social Media and Marketing Manager for Texan by Nature, and a passionate advocate for connecting people with nature through innovative digital spaces. Based in the Hill Country of the great state of Texas, Tiara's journey as a science communicator and parks enthusiast has taken her from the sleeping volcanoes of Alaska's Wrangell St. Elias National Park and Preserve to the serene shores of Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area. She is an active volunteer board member for several organizations including the Informal Science Educators Association of Texas, ActivEnviro, and Friends of San Antonio Natural Areas.



Will Jennings is a writer, photo-documentarian, musician, and community organizer and Associate Professor of Instruction Emeritus at the University of Iowa. His multidisciplinary approach to human-centered geography, design, and critical mapping/cartography has been central to his academic, narrative, and creative writing interests. His sequenced essay memoir, "How I Know Orion" is forthcoming on Ice Cube Press, mapping the indirect and intergenerational language of violent trauma and recovery. He is also certified Wilderness First Responder/Search and Rescue Volunteer.



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.

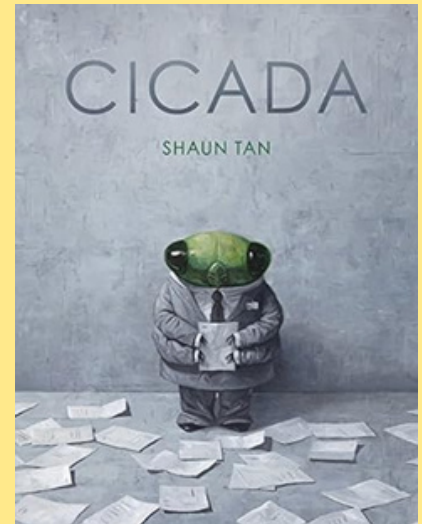
Learn more about our panel members at www.naturebookguide.com/about

For the Child in All of Us

Cicada, Shaun Tan (author/illustrator),
Hodder Children's Books, 2018, 32 pages

Reading age: 12 and up

"On its surface, *Cicada* is a beautifully illustrated kid's book but if you dig a little deeper what emerges is a broody little read that explores bullying, belonging, and what it's like to shuck your shell and grow some wings. 10/10: Would recommend that you find out what all the buzz is about in this dazzling quick read." --Tiara Chapman



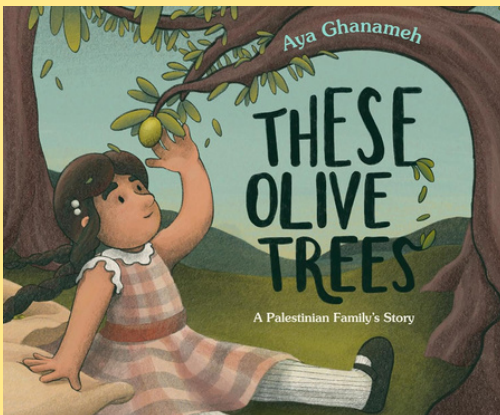
Recommended by Tiara Chapman,
Social Media and Marketing Manager for Texan by Nature



These Olive Trees, Aya Ghanameh (author/illustrator),
Viking Books for Young Readers, 2023, 40 pages,

Reading age: 4-10 years

Debut author/illustrator Aya Ghanameh's inspiration for *These Olive Trees* is her grandmother's family refugee history. Set in 1967 Palestine, little Oriab's family is forced to flee war yet again. She takes time to honor "home" by planting olives. The trees are a symbol of Palestinian resistance, longevity, and identity. There is sadness and bitterness here, but also hope, patience, and a belief in the future.



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

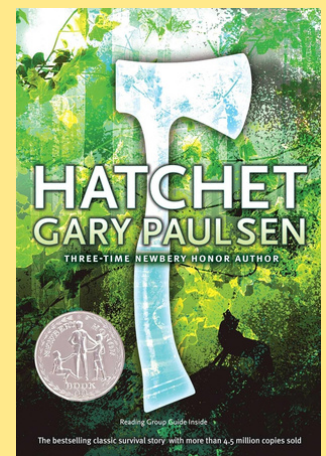


Hatchet, Gary Paulsen,
Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers,
paperback 2006/originally published 1987, 192 pages

Reading Age: 9+ years

**Winner: Newbery Honor,
William Allen White Children's
Book Award**

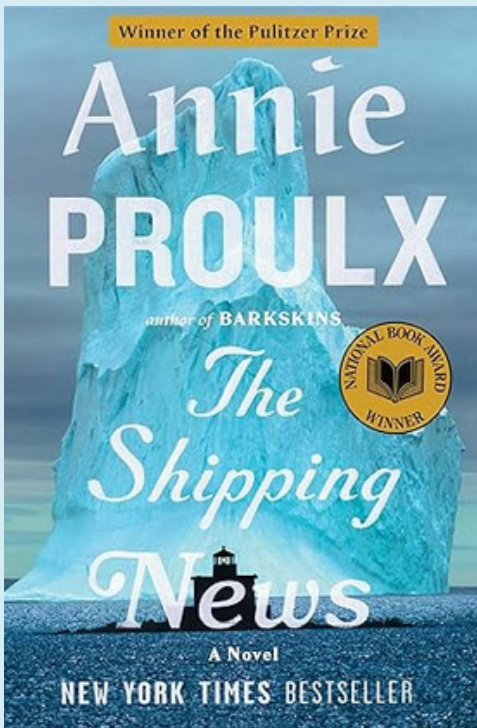
Thirteen-year-old Brian Robeson has plans to spend the summer with his father in Canada when the private plane he's on crashes in the wilderness. Armed only with a hatchet, Brian survives by confronting his fears and self-pity, learning survival skills (building a campfire and shelter and learning to hunt and fish), and adjusting to the dangers of the forest including encounters with bear, moose, and a tornado. A turbo-paced wilderness survival adventure that kids and adults will enjoy. *Hatchet* is the first in a five-book series about Brian by Paulsen.



Fiction

Winner, Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award

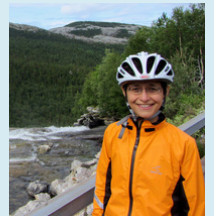
The Shipping News, Annie Proulx,
Charles Scribners Sons, 1993, 352 pages



"I thoroughly enjoyed reading *The Shipping News*. The novel captures the landscape and natural environment of Newfoundland beautifully. It shows how landscape and environment can shape people's sense of place, their way of life, and the culture of daily life. This is a story about seeking and finding new beginnings that will resonate with many readers. It is also a story about the connection between people and places that resonated with me personally when I read it at a time during which I was reflecting a lot on issues of place identity and place attachment."

--Noha Shawki

Recommended by Noha Shawki,
Professor at Illinois State University,
co-founder of the Center for a Sustainable Water Future



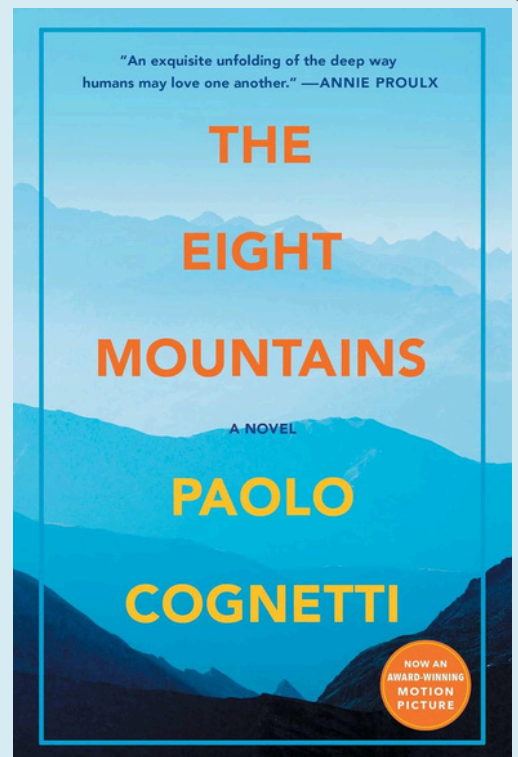
The Eight Mountains: A Novel, Paolo Cognetti,
Washington Square Press, 2019, 224 pages

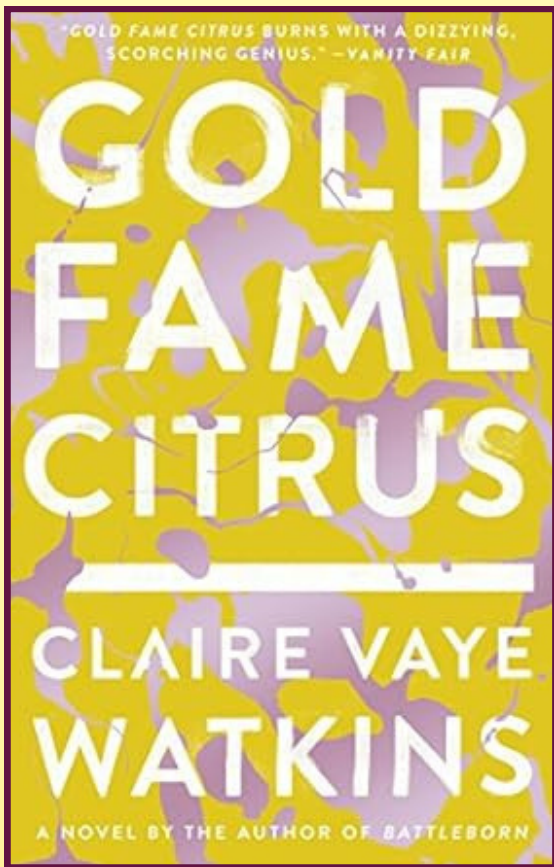
"Eight Mountains is a quiet, reflective novel of two friends who reconnect over the course of their lives on a mountain in the Alps, where one friend has lived all of his life and the other visits many summers. More than just a coming-of-age story, this story explores the bonds of relationships in its many forms – between friends, family members, love relationships, and of course, relationships between oneself and the surrounding landscape."

--Rachel Hutchens



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





Best Book of the Year: Washington Post, NPR, Vanity Fair, LA Times, San Francisco Chronicle, Huffington Post, The Atlantic, Ploughshares, Lit Hub, Book Riot, Powells, BookPage, and Kirkus Reviews

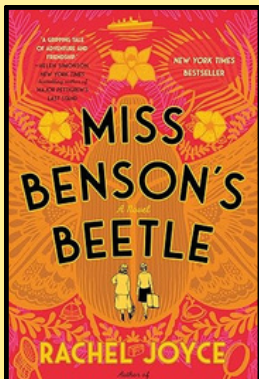
Gold Fame Citrus: A Novel, Claire Vaye Watkins, Riverhead Books, 2015, 352 pages

"In breathtaking, searing prose, *Gold Fame Citrus* paints post-apocalyptic California in fluorescent color. At the heart of the novel are Luz and Ray, survivors and drifters who rescue a small child named Ig. A makeshift family, they set off across a landscape of city-swallowing sand dunes, warring factions, and dangerous cults in search of a better life. The result is a dizzying and kaleidoscopic portrait of love, betrayal, and survival, in a world that shifts as easily as sand underfoot."

--Laura Mills



Recommended by Laura Mills,
Writer and nature enthusiast



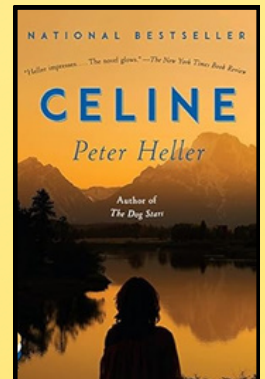
Miss Benson's Beetle,
Rachel Joyce,
Dial Press Trade Paperback,
2020, 368 pages

**Winner, Wilbur Smith
Adventure Writing Prize
New York Times Bestseller**

Margery Benson is fed up with her life, a spinster with a meager existence in post-war London. She quits her teaching position in spectacular fashion, risking everything to achieve a childhood obsession -- finding the elusive Golden Beetle of New Caledonia. Hiring a most unsuitable assistant, they set out on a journey to the other side of the world. A zany story about the power of friendship, *Miss Benson's Beetle* is a good-natured "beach read" adventure with strong characters and great fun.

Celine,
Peter Heller,
Vintage (paperback), 2018,
352 pages

**National Bestseller from
the author of *The Dog Stars***



Celine Watkins is a private eye in her late 60s with a prep school pedigree and an eagerness to work the last case of her career. When a young woman asks her to solve her father's disappearance outside Yellowstone National Park twenty years before, Celine sets out on a scavenger hunt through memory and family secrets -- her client's and her own. With suspense, great plotting, and spectacular settings, *Celine* is a perfect summer thriller for a relaxing summer weekend.

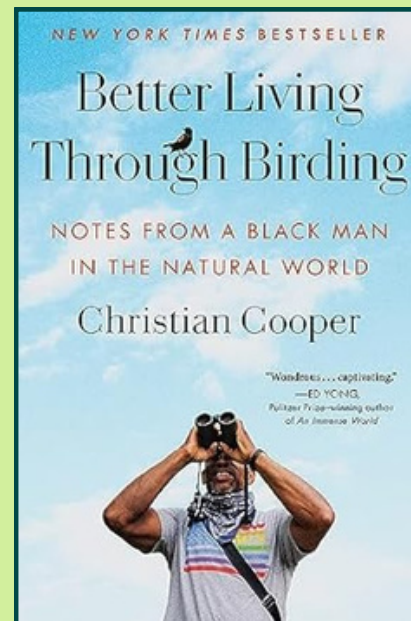
Memoirs

**New York Times Bestseller, Longlisted for the Andrew Carnegie Medal,
Best Book of the Year: Washington Post, Chicago Public Library**

Better Living Through Birding: Notes from a Black Man in the Natural World,
Christian Cooper, Random House, 2023, 304 pages

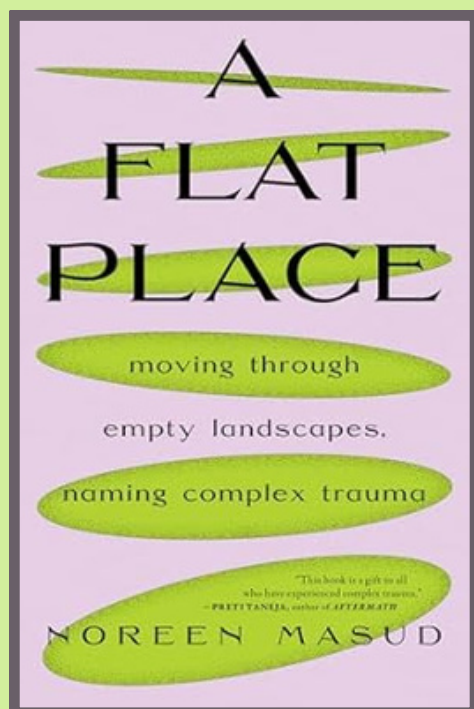
"I love memoirs about interesting people, and Cooper's *Better Living Through Birding* did not disappoint. Cooper's ability to paint a picture with words makes such a wonderful story. I knew he was a birder, but he offers a front-row seat to his evolution from young birder in New York to speaker and leader in the birding community. He provides insight into a truly rich and full life -- finding his way at an Ivy League school, writing superhero stories for Marvel, working for LGBTQ+ and racial equality and justice, connecting with his family, and so much more. Through it all he vividly describes the birds, nature, people, worldwide locations, and personal experiences that have made him who he is today. Find time to read about Cooper's life so far -- it's a story you'll get wrapped up in and not want to put down."

--Shelly Plante



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

Shortlisted: Royal Society of Literature Ondaatje Prize, Women's Prize for Nonfiction, Charlotte Aitken Young Writer of the Year Award, The New Yorker Best Book of 2023



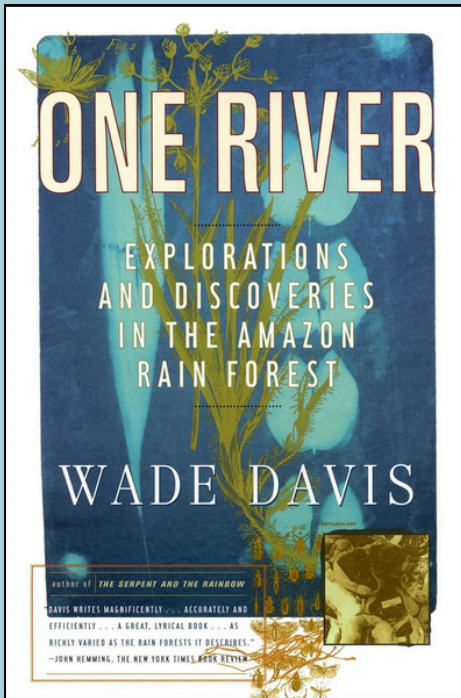
A Flat Place: Moving through Empty Landscapes, Naming Complex Trauma,
Noreen Masud, Melville House, 2023, 256 pages

**"Flat landscapes have always given me a way to love myself."
--Noreen Masud**

A profound and moving memoir, Masud writes of her escape from a psychologically abusive home in Pakistan for a new life in Scotland. Beyond her migration to a new culture there is another journey to address -- complex post-traumatic stress disorder (C-PTSD). Finding beauty and solace in wide-open vistas -- from the first flat place on her way to school in Pakistan, to the fens and beaches and tidal flats and islands of the UK -- she discovers that she is finally "moving along the grain, instead of against it." Sorrowful and tender *A Flat Place* is one of our favorite memoirs of the year.

Water and Shore

One River: Explorations and Discoveries in the Amazon Rain Forest, Wade Davis, Simon & Schuster, 1997, 544 pages



"To me, the Amazon will always be the unsurpassed paradise. No matter how many new places, national parks or ecosystems I visit, none compare to the lush, dense, vibrant, fragrant, mysterious and awfully humid rainforests of South America. That's probably why I'm so drawn to reading about the groundbreaking travels of ethnobotanist Richard Evans Schultes. I wish I could have gone on his explorative trips through the forest with him, minus the life-threatening tropical diseases and attacks by uncontacted tribes.

"One River is the story of two generations of ethnobotanists, Schultes and his protégés Plowman and Davis, who unveil the botanical secrets of coca, a sacred plant known to the Inca as the Divine Leaf of Immortality, and many other indigenous medicinal floras.

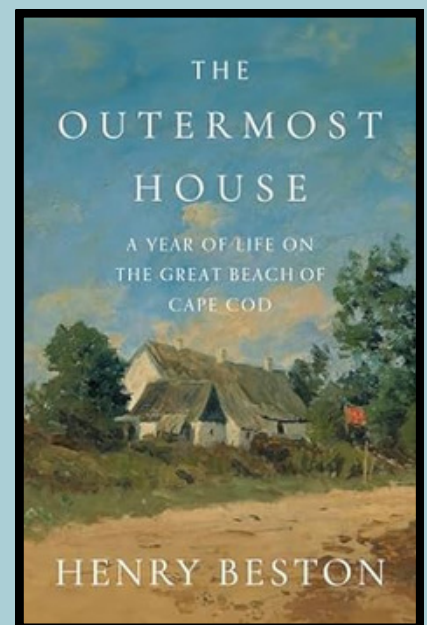
"The book tells two stories: it chronologically follows the travel of Schultes' students in the year 1974-1975 through South America, while also describing the most extraordinary period of Schultes' life between 1936 and 1953 that took him from the peyote cult of the Kiowa in the United States to the long-lost sacred plants of the Aztec in Colombia."
--Judith Westveer



Recommended by Judith Westveer, Assistant Director and Conservation Ecologist, Southern Plains Land Trust, with experience working with several Amazon-based environmental nonprofit organizations

The Outermost House: A Year of Life on the Great Beach of Cape Cod, Henry Beston, Doubleday (originally published 1928), 256 pages

Henry Beston's cottage on the dunes of Cape Cod was meant to be a retreat after his experiences in World War I, but he soon found he could not leave the tiny home nestled between the ocean and Nauset Marsh. His stories of the tides, seabirds, wind, rain, and seagrass capture this wild remote place in all seasons. A graceful and poetic nature literary classic, *The Outermost House* influenced Rachel Carson's work and is credited with the establishment of the Cape Cod National Seashore. Sadly, the cottage could not withstand the high tides during a winter hurricane in 1978 and was taken by the storm. This is a vintage read as fresh as any contemporary work. A vicarious trip to a place that is no more, *The Outermost House* is a must-read.



"Just about every Texan naturalist has either read this book, been given a copy, or has one collecting dust on their bookshelf. Earlier this year, after being gifted the book a decade ago, I blew off that dust and finally cracked open this quintessential love letter to Texas history and the Brazos River.

"John Graves' *Goodbye to A River* was published over 60 years ago to instant critical acclaim. Just about everything that can be said, has been said about how he masterfully crafted a tale for the ages during his three weeks on the Brazos. About how his use of vivid imagery, heartfelt narrative, and passionate portrayal of the Texas landscape makes for an irresistible read. About how any Texan worth their salt could read this book and literally hear Sandhill cranes or feel a pang in their shoulders as he describes setting up camp or catch the smell of cured tobacco wafting off the locals he met along the way. All naturalists rave about this book.

"And still, I got bored.

"Think what you'd like about me but the Texas Thoreau lost me around Chapter 7. I set the book down and didn't pick it up again for a week. During that time, my attention was laser-focused on the new Taylor Swift album, *The Tortured Poets Department* which features what will absolutely be the TikTok Sound of the Summer, *Florida!!!*

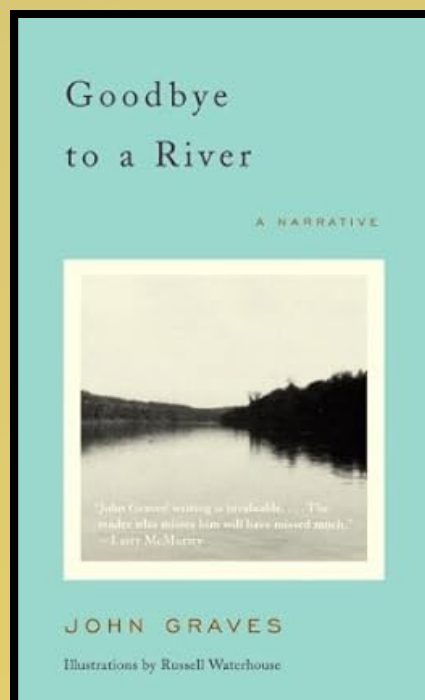
"In the song, Swift and Florence Leontine Mary Welch croon about place and safety and belonging in such a delicious way where you come to realize all of those things ultimately constructs to begin with, "Little did you know your home's really only a town you're just a guest in." As the outro resolved, I ran back to Graves. Everything finally clicked.

"This book wasn't just some ol' white guy droning on about when the west was wild. This was a book about a man trying to go home again and reconciling with the truth that he never can. He says he didn't want a bold journey but every word thereafter is his slow realization of how this river, how this life, takes as much as it gives. Just as T. Swift calls the Sunshine State of Mind one hell of a drug, Graves is out there looking for the Brazos to use him up. He's *Down Bad*, wakin' up in bloody feet and starin' at the sky, waitin' for that bittersweet feeling of nostalgia to come back and pick him up.

"It won't. It never does. But the paddle is always worth it.

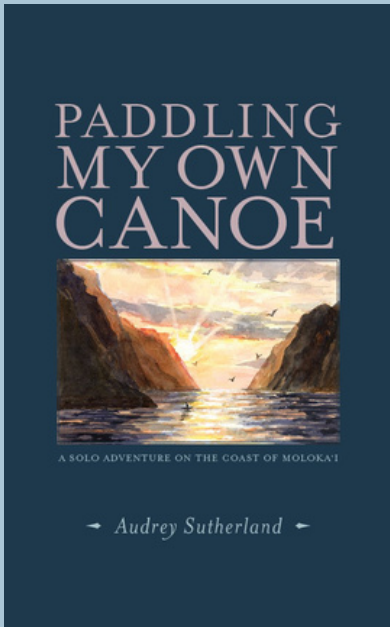
"10/10 would recommend."

Recommended by Tiara Chapman,
Social Media and Marketing Manager for Texan by Nature



Goodbye to a River: A Narrative,
John Graves, Vintage, 2002,
(originally published by Alfred A. Knopf, 1960),
320 pages

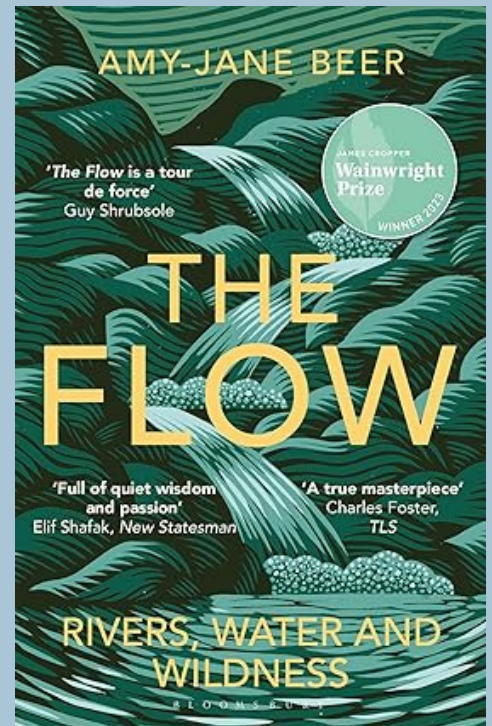
Paddling My Own Canoe: A Solo Adventure on the Coast of Molokai,
Audrey Sutherland, (illustrations by Yoshiko Yamamoto), Patagonia, 2018 (originally published 1978), 176 pages



In 1957 Audrey Sutherland saw a remote part of the Hawaiian coast from the air. She writes: *"Hula'ana, in the Hawaiian language, is a place where it is necessary to swim past a cliff that blocks passage along a coast, a sheer cliff where the sun beats. ... Looking down on it was not enough. I wanted to be there, but I couldn't afford to hire a boat. All right, I'd have to swim."* Her first attempt was in 1962 before modern adventure gear was available. She towed supplies stuffed inside a weather balloon. Terrifying failures followed, including a scramble up a sheer rock face to escape an impassable stretch of ocean, but Sutherland was undeterred. In between attempts, the single mother raised four children and worked as a school counselor and educational administrator. Finally succeeding in 1967 with the use of an inflatable canoe, her story reflects her mantra, "Go simple, go solo, go now." Do not miss her list of "What Every Kid Should Be Able to Do by Age Sixteen," or her equipment list--which includes wine, a topographical map, high-topped tennis shoes, and a plane ticket home.

2023 Wainwright Prize for Nature Writing

The Flow: Rivers, Water and Wildness,
Amy-Jane Beer, Bloomsbury Wildlife, 2022, 401 pages



"Feeling unmoored all winter by a death in the family, I'd been pining for a new connection with nature. We didn't have enough snow to satisfy the need, so as I read Beer's masterful work in January, I purchased a kayak online sight unseen. Living most of the last twenty years in arid climates, it had been years since I'd been in a kayak. Getting out on the water was more than just a new athletic pursuit. It signaled a need for contemplative, quiet time alone; a desire to observe the world from a new perspective; a new way to practice independence and seek new adventures. Each page of Beer's book drew me to the water, eager to know more about rivers and their wildness. There are miles of shoreline habitats to explore and much more to understand about the movement of water. This is one book I'll keep near all summer to fuel all of that."

--Beth Nobles

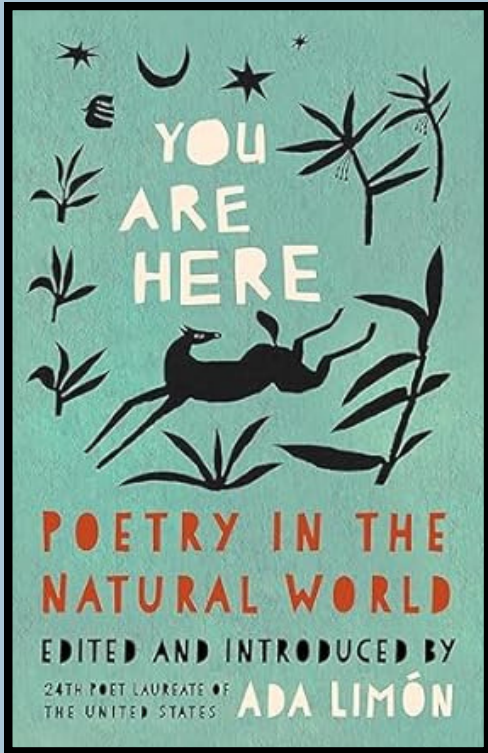
Recommended by Beth Nobles,
Founder/Editor, Nature Book Guide



Poetry

National Bestseller

You are Here: Poetry in the Natural World,
Ada Limón, Milkweed Editions, 2024, 176 pages



Recommended by Susan Futrell,
author, essayist,
sustainable agriculture consultant

You Are Here is both the title of a new anthology of poems, edited by Ada Limón, and the name of her signature initiative as the 24th Poet Laureate of the US. Limón's project launched in April (National Poetry Month) and will continue throughout the year with installations of poetry as public art in national parks across the country. She invites the public to join in by writing their own responses to the landscape around them.

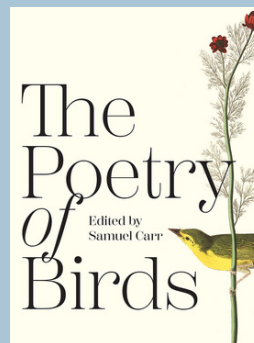
"Limón includes new poems from 52 poets across the US, commissioned specifically for this project. They are diverse in age, geography, experience, and style. Some are beloved and familiar—Joy Harjo, Jericho Brown, Dorianne Laux—and many others are new to me, a beautiful way to discover dozens of new voices.

"Many of the poems are suffused with a sense of loss, nostalgia, sometimes grief, giving the collection a somberness that is very much in tune with these times we're living in. Just enough, throughout, though, are poems of simple joy, connection, and survival, reminding us that nature, community, joy are the things that will get us through."
--Susan Futrell

Habitat Threshold,
Craig Santos Perez,
Omnidawn, 2020, 80 pages



Habitat Threshold is our second recommendation of Craig Santos Perez's work. The Guam native's experimental ecopoetry is steeped in the environmental and cultural concerns of his Chamorro roots. He writes with tenderness, power, beauty, eloquence, sorrow, and rage. A must-read.

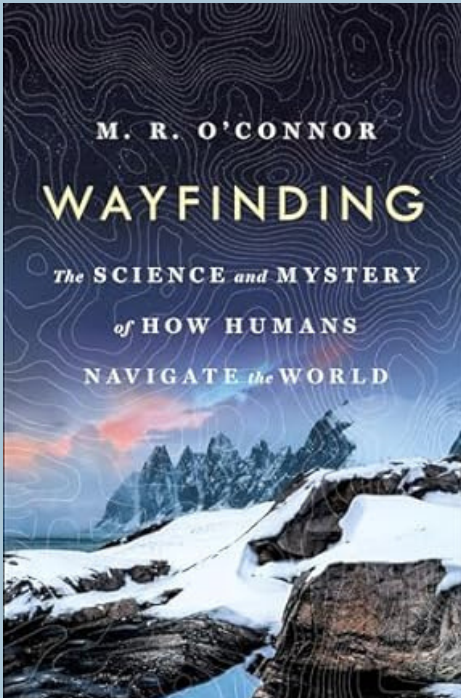


The Poetry of Birds,
Samuel Carr (editor),
Batsford, 2023, 192 pages

Dip into this beauty when searching for moments of calm and wonder. Illustrated with crisp details of Audubon's paintings of birds, this collection features poems from the 1600s to the 1900s, including works by Shakespeare, Blake, Whitman, Dickinson, Frost, and Thoreau. A perfect gift for bird lovers.

Nonfiction

Wayfinding: The Science and Mystery of How Humans Navigate the World,
M.R. O'Connor, St. Martin's Press,
2019, 368 pages



"In *Wayfinding*, author and seasoned journalist M. R. O'Connor explores cultures in the Arctic, the Australian interior, and Pacific Islands, and their unique methods for navigation and defining their land- and seascapes.

"O'Connor addresses the dissonance between technological advances in human navigation and more place-based, experiential narratives of cultures. With analysis of human neural networks, the effects of dopamine response, and the highly accurate mapping and location practices which defy more common Western traditions, O'Connor writes with skill and an engaging voice.

"Naturalists will find O'Connor's subject and approach a rewarding and accessible text that avoids the misuse (or abuse) of the word "intuitive" as a stand-in for Western and Colonial romanticizing of indigenous and First Nations cultures. Ultimately, "How "Navigation Makes Us Human" is a survey about our attention to process and not a checklist of cause and effect, marking O'Connor's text as illuminating as it is satisfying."

--Will Jennings



Recommended by Will Jennings, Guest Panelist

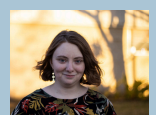
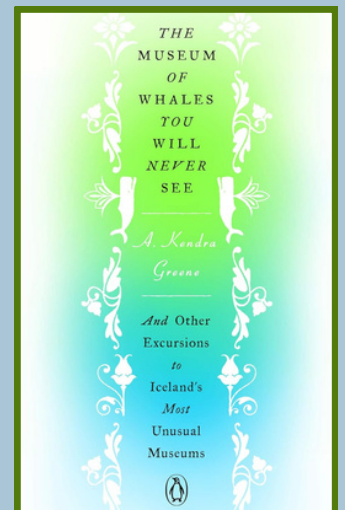
Writer, photo-documentarian, musician, and community organizer; creator of a Strategic Sustainability Advocacy course at the University of Iowa; and certified Wilderness First Responder/Search and Rescue Volunteer.

*The Museum of Whales You Will Never See:
and Other Excursions to Iceland's Most Unusual Museums*,
A. Kendra Greene, Penguin Books, 2020, 272 pages

"More than a travelogue, *The Museum of Whales You Will Never See* takes readers on a journey through Iceland's strangest museums, from well-known oddities like the Phallogical Museum all the way down to the personal stone collection of a woman named Petra. Along the way Greene tells the stories of the museum curators - often ordinary people who stumbled into their line of work by way of odd fixations, circumstance, and even a drunken joke among friends. Green's wry humor masks a much deeper fascination with the human need to collect, categorize, and preserve. As she directs her gaze towards these personal collections, she examines objects and ideas that might have been forgotten if they weren't given a place of honor in a little museum on a remote island."

--Laura Mills

Recommended by Laura Mills,
Writer and nature enthusiast



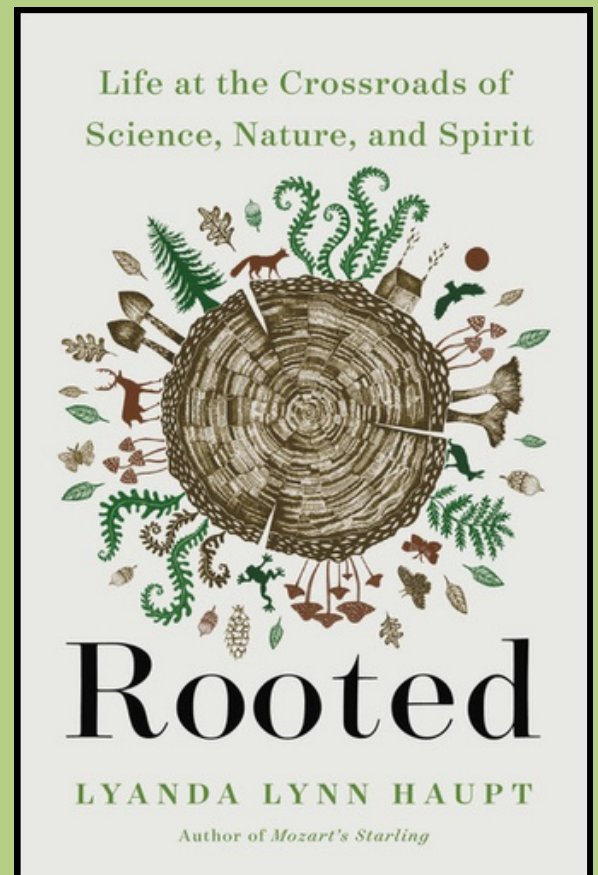
**Deepen your connection to the natural world with this inspiring meditation,
"a path to the place where science and spirit meet" --Robin Wall Kimmerer**

"Award-winning writer Lyanda Lynn Haupt's recent book *Rooted: Life at the Crossroads of Science, Nature, and Spirit* is a treasure for those interested in making deeper connections or justifying their current connections to the environment, nature, and the outdoors. If it reaches the same audience level, this book has the potential to have the same impact as works such as Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, in my view. Each chapter provides the reader with in-depth information on connecting with the natural world and interconnectedness to the similar worlds of science, nature, and the spirit. For example, her interpretation of the classic tale of "Little Red Riding Hood" may leave some alarmed. Still, it does force one to think about the story from different perspectives and provides an alternative interpretation of the wolf's actions. The author, a naturalist, birder, eco-philosopher, and public speaker, first graced us with *Rare Encounters with Ordinary Birds* in 2004 and has since continued quality writing with titles such as *Mozart's Starling*, *Crow Planet: Essential Wisdom from the Urban Wilderness*, *Pilgrim on the Great Bird Continent: The Importance of Everything* and *Other Lessons from Darwin's Lost Notebook*, and my personal favorite, *The Urban Bestiary: Encountering the Everyday Wild*. I recommend *Rooted* to anyone who likes a good nature read or enjoys exploring the intersectionality and interconnectedness of things around us, personally and professionally."

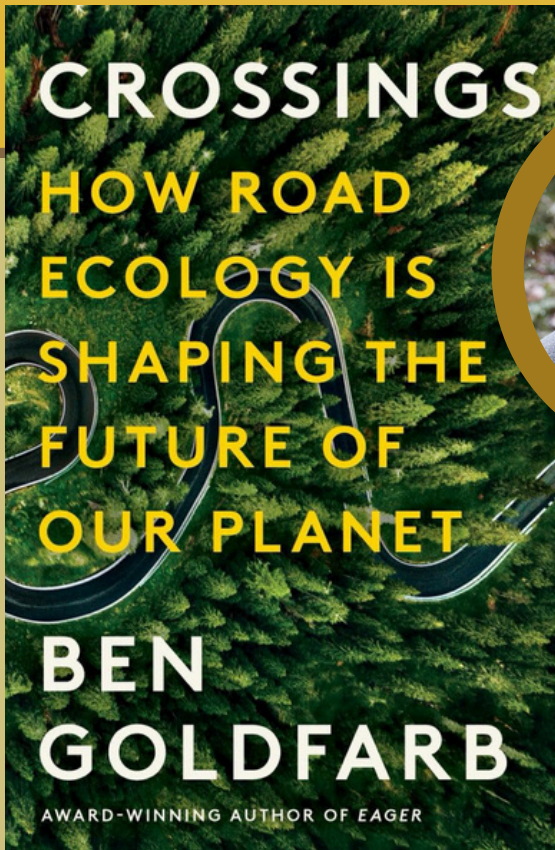
--James P. Stancil, II

Recommended by James P. Stancil, II
educator and outdoor volunteer, founder of Nature by the Book

*Rooted: Life at the
Crossroads of
Science, Nature,
and Spirit*, Lyanda
Lynn Haupt, Little,
Brown Spark, 2021,
240 pages



An Interview with Author Ben Goldfarb



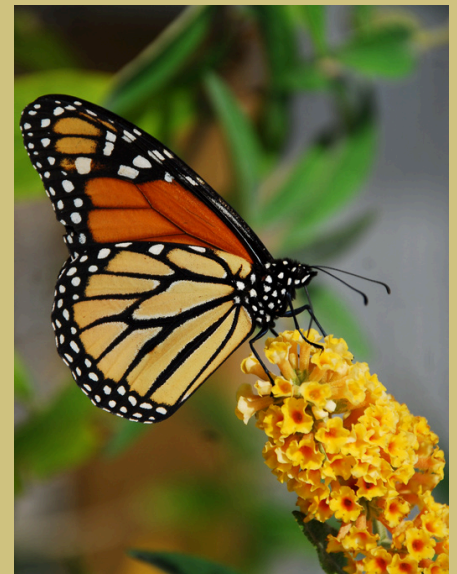
Crossings: How Road Ecology is Shaping the Future of our Planet,
Ben Goldfarb,
W.W. Norton, 2023, 384 pages

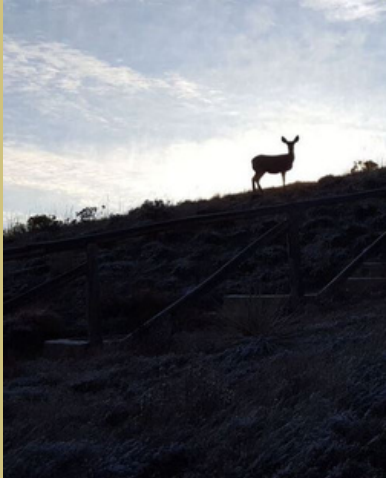
***Finalist: Reading the West Book Award in Nonfiction,
Shortlisted for the New York Public Library's
2024 Helen Bernstein Book Award for Excellence in Journalism,
New York Times Notable Book of 2023 and an Editors' Choice,
Booklist Top 10 Book on the Environment & Sustainability for 2024***

**Ben, it is an honor to visit with you about *Crossings!*
Thank you for sharing your thoughts with our readers.**

You cite quite a few community science projects that have resulted in a greater understanding of animals, road ecology, and infrastructure solutions. They sound like fun experiences for volunteers—projects supporting toad and salamander tunnels, Project Splatter, the Otter Project, Wildlife Connectivity Project, Monarch Watch, and the Harborton Frog Shuttle. What were some of your favorite volunteer projects? Do you have any advice for readers who want to find a project near them? How can volunteers get involved?

You named many of the great ones! More than perhaps any other field, road ecology is ripe for participatory science. As drivers, we're all part of the problem, both by killing animals and by exacerbating the highway's barrier effect. But we're also potentially part of the solution. Every dead animal, however tragic, is a data point, and, by recording the species and location of the carcasses we pass, we can help government agencies identify roadkill hotspots and ideally address them. Many states, from Maine to Utah to Idaho, have volunteer roadkill data collection programs, and in California, the state has drawn upon UC Davis's Roadkill Observation System to locate some wildlife crossings. And even if kneeling over corpses isn't your thing, you can still participate in this issue by contacting your elected representatives and supporting those groups, like the Wildlands Network and the Center for Large Landscape Conservation, that advocate for habitat connectivity. Roadkill prevention is a fundamentally nonpartisan issue that's easy for politicians of all stripes to support, but they always need a push from their constituents.





A key point in *Crossings* is the presence of roads interrupting migration and the ability of animals to wander freely. Road speeds and the density of traffic affects species differently, so a solution for one species won't necessarily work for another, making a single solution for all species impossible. You write that pedestrian studies are the sister science to road ecology and note Sandra Jacobson's insightful work on animals' reactions to roads. Citing Jacobson's work, as a pedestrian, are you a non-responder (like a leopard frog, who hops across no matter the traffic), a pauser (like a porcupine or skunk), an avoider (grizzly bear), or a speeder (deer)?

Ha! I think most humans, like deer, are speeders – we wait for gaps in traffic, then quickly scurry across. (Of course, on a car-dominated planet, this strategy isn't always effective, whether you're a hominid or an ungulate: More than seven thousand American pedestrians, and upwards of a million deer, are killed by cars every year.) But there's a key difference between our two speeder species. Humans have excellent depth perception and an intimate familiarity with cars; therefore, we're comfortable darting through gaps between vehicles that last only a few seconds. Deer, by contrast, are poor judges of speed with little comprehension of cars; as a result, the ecologist Corinna Riginos has found, they need gaps of more than a minute to safely and reliably cross. Few U.S. highways have such sparse traffic and when vehicular walls are too dense for deer to reliably penetrate, they can lose access to their winter range and other valuable habitats, and even starve as a result. Being a speeder is therefore dangerous in two respects: It's perilous both to race through traffic, and to avoid crossing altogether. It's tough out there for us speeders!

At the end of the introduction, you write *Crossings* "also considers how our own lives have been captured by pavement and how we can reclaim them." How has this book altered your own life and your relationship to roads and vehicles?



Well, that's difficult to say. I've tried to be a better citizen of our paved planet: forgoing my car in favor of transit and bicycle more often, driving slower and more cautiously, shepherding tarantulas and rattlesnakes off highways. Yet I'm still overly reliant on my car; I've probably driven 10,000 miles in the last seven months to promote my book about, uh, the ills of driving. I think one of this book's chief lessons is that it's extremely difficult to get people to voluntarily change their behavior; we can no more solve roadkill by insisting that Americans stop driving than we can prevent climate change by swapping out our lightbulbs. Instead, the solution is to modify our infrastructure itself: Let's dramatically improve our public transit options, remove obsolete roads on public lands where we can, and build more wildlife crossings everywhere. The task and opportunity before us is to remake our built environment to save biodiversity – no pressure, right?

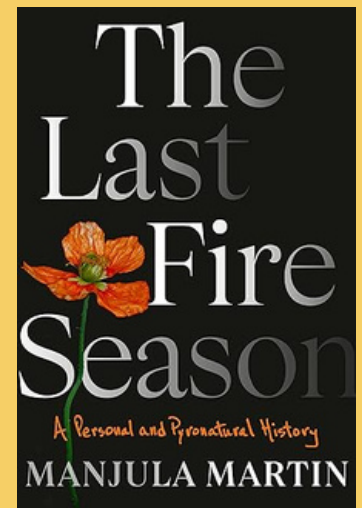
Wildfire

National Bestseller, A “Most Anticipated” Book: New York Times, Los Angeles Times, San Francisco Chronicle, Poets & Writers

The Last Fire Season: A Personal and Pyronatural History,
Manjula Martin, Pantheon, 2024, 354 pages

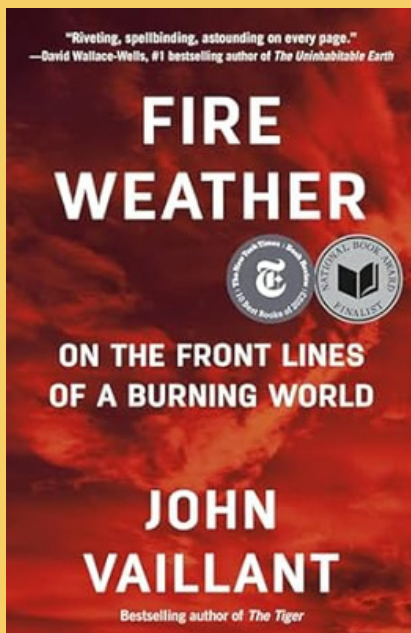
Beautifully written, Manjula Martin’s memoir is the deeply personal story of living with the near constant threat of wildfire. A city dweller who moved to the redwoods of Sonoma County, California, her garden became a refuge from health issues and chronic pain until the pandemic year of 2020, when the very real life and death question became “evacuate or stay?”

Recommended by Adrianna Weickhardt
Natural Resource Specialist, Natural Resources Conservation Service



Fire Country: How Indigenous Fire Management Could Help Save Australia,
Victor Steffensen, Hardie Grant Travel, 2020, 221 pages

In this eye-opening and important read, Australian Indigenous land management expert Victor Steffensen passionately recalls his study of cultural fire practices under the tutelage of elders in North Queensland. “Cool burns” require an extensive and deep understanding of native ecosystems and could restore land with a greater defense against future wildfire threats. For every copy sold, the publisher will donate a dollar to Firesticks, Steffensen’s organization to promote cultural burning, healthy communities, and healthy landscapes.



Finalist, National Book Award in Nonfiction
New York Times Top 10 Book of the Year

Fire Weather: On the Front Lines of a Burning World, John Vaillant,
Knopf, 2023, 432 pages

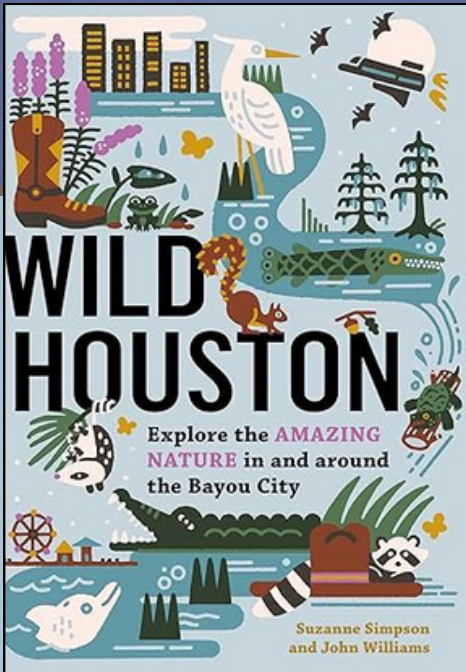
“In an increasingly hotter world with fewer natural fire breaks, less water and higher temperatures, fires are burning faster and hotter than ever. The impacts of climate change, the lack of planning by officials and corporations, and the feeling of “it will never happen here” created a dangerous mix in Fort McMurray (Alberta, Canada) in 2016. *Fire Weather* is a true story and a cautionary tale - we should all be better prepared.”

--Courtney Lyons-Garcia

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



Exploring Nature in Urban Places: An Interview with Author Suzanne Simpson



Author photo: Keith Andringa

Wild Houston: Explore the Amazing Nature in and around the Bayou City,
Suzanne Simpson and John Williams,
Timber Press, 2023,
352 pages



Interview by James P. Stancil, II,
educator and volunteer, founder/Nature by the Book, and
Nature Book Guide Recommendation Panelist

Suzanne Simpson, aka WETLAND SUZANNE on social media, it's a pleasure to have you here, sharing your insights with the *Nature Book Guide*. Let's dive right in. With your extensive knowledge in urban exploration and environmental conservation, we're excited to hear your thoughts on nature enthusiasts exploring metropolitan areas. What thrilling advice do you have for urban adventurers who are eager to discover and experience "nature" in a city?

Any urban explorer will be familiar with the standard browser searches and trip planning websites, but consider checking out iNaturalist before your visit to a city. You will get a "heat map" of where nature has been observed, and you can cater your criteria to find the critters you most want to see. For example, if I'm visiting Phoenix and want to see a rattlesnake (yep, I'm that person), iNaturalist observations would tell me to take my chances at South Mountain Park and Preserve or Phoenix Mountains Preserve. Guess I just planned a trip!



Live Oak trees at Houston's Rice University

Phoenix, Arizona, get ready, HERE COMES WETLAND SUZANNE! Those are great tips, Suzanne. Thanks! I have another question for you: How can readers find their city's most vibrant and impactful nature-based organizations?

I always recommend connecting with your local land trust, which you can find on the Land Trust Alliance's website. These organizations are doing the boots-on-the-ground work of protecting habitat and building community. Beyond that, find your people by doing what you love. If it's mountain biking, head to the trail and volunteer for a work day; if it's birding or botany, connect with a nearby arboretum or sanctuary to get involved. You can find like-minded groups like Outdoor Afro or Latino Outdoors in many metropolitan areas. Local organizations thrive on connecting with passionate people like you.

That's very kind of you to say, Suzanne! I try to do my best to help get people outdoors with Outdoor Afro and my work with Nature by the Book for Intellect U Well, Inc. Speaking of educating folks about the outdoors, what were some of the first lessons you learned when exploring nature in our fine city of Houston? Is there a big difference from what you would see in more rural or remote locations?

City wildlife often exhibit behavior that deviates from their country cousins. For example, at the Waugh Bat Bridge in Houston, black-crowned night herons prey upon Mexican free-tailed bats that emerge each night from the bridge. If you explore heron's typical diets, bats are never listed on the menu. City nature, whether wildlife, plant, or fungi, thrive on the opportunism that can only be created by their unique built environment. Prepare to make a discovery.



Black-crowned night heron

That's awesome, Suzanne. I hope some of our readers will take your advice and enjoy the opportunities to explore nature in their own cities, not just further away from the bright lights and skylines. On that note, is there a way nature lovers can find mass transit or multi-modal (train, bike, bus, trail, walk) connections to nature areas in their city?

Houston is famous for catering to cars, but even we have a Whistlestop Prairie Tour where you can view pocket prairies via our light rail system. Get familiar with the transit in your area and gauge your appetite for adventure before setting off. Always prepare with adequate food and water, even for an urban journey.

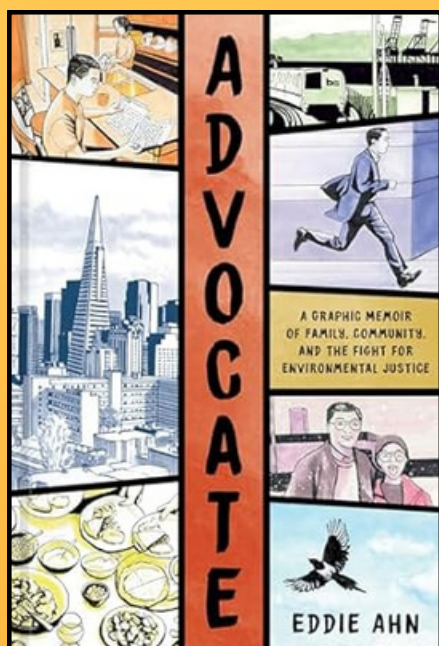
Wow, that Whistlestop Prairie Tour is new to me. I will need to try that out. Those are also good tips for exploring urban nature. I know you are very knowledgeable about various ecosystems, and we have a rather unique one in the Houston area. Have you found certain ecosystems (wetlands, forests, prairie, etc.) easier or harder to find in urban areas? Any tips for finding those hidden gems (like older cemeteries or some corporate parks)?

Coastal prairies are particularly difficult to happen across in urban areas because they require a careful disturbance regime (think: fire, grazing, mowing) to prevent encroachment from woody vegetation. And what takes the prairie's place isn't a vibrant, healthy forest; it's usually a monoculture of invasive species with little benefit to wildlife and people. To find hidden pockets of habitat, check out free resources like Google Earth or use the aerial imagery setting on Google Maps. Amazing places have been discovered just by zooming in and out on what others overlooked. The Deer Park Prairie, featured in Wild Houston, was found by a "prairie hunter" using aerial imagery.

Advocacy and Advocate Stories

Trish O’Kane’s *Birding to Change the World* is a glorious book: a powerful memoir, a bird guide, a case for environmental justice, and a blueprint for advocacy. It is funny (it had us laughing in the prologue) and poignant (tears by page two). O’Kane’s life has interesting chapters -- working as a journalist and translator in Sandinista Nicaragua, a researcher for the Southern Poverty Law Center, and a volunteer writing teacher in a women’s prison. A month after moving to New Orleans to teach at Loyola University, Hurricane Katrina flooded the city. She lost everything, but becoming a birder was part of her trauma recovery. When she left New Orleans to pursue a Ph.D. in Environmental Studies at the University of Wisconsin she wasn’t clear about the direction of her work. Birdwatching in her neighborhood park drew her to advocacy for that natural place, ultimately becoming the subject of her scholarship. Bird clubs for kids, proposals for humane goose control, and advocating for conservation and sound land use policy followed. The real power here is that her work was done -- not in a remote wild place -- but an ordinary city park serving an ordinary neighborhood in Madison, Wisconsin. O’Kane’s story provides a reassuring example for advocates doing environmental work in their own communities.

Birding to Change the World: A Memoir,
Trish O’Kane, Ecco, 2024, 368 pages

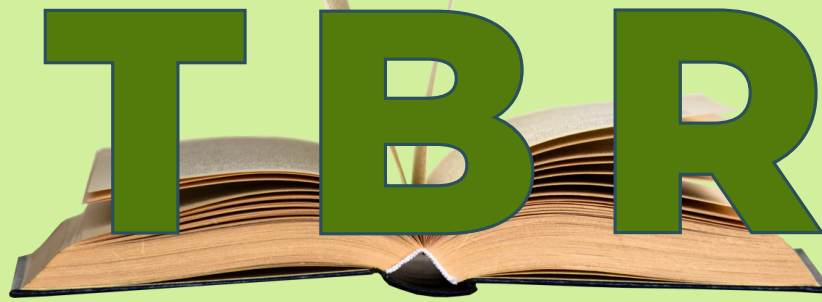


National Bestseller

Advocate: A Graphic Memoir of Family, Community, and the Fight for Environmental Justice, Eddie Ahn (author/illustrator)
Ten Speed Graphic, 2024, 208 pages

Eddie Ahn defied his immigrant parents’ expectations by attending law school and becoming a nonprofit worker and environmental attorney, instead of working in his family’s liquor store. A self-taught artist with impressive credentials (awards as cartoonist-in-residence of the Charles M. Schulz Museum and inductee to the State of California’s Clean Energy Hall of Fame), he’s created an honest accounting of an unlikely road to success and the realities and frustrations of working in community engagement and advocacy. Ahn’s story is essential reading for aspiring advocates.

"TO BE READ" BOOKS IN THE SUMMER 2024 ISSUE



- Page 7: *Cicada*, Shaun Tan (author/illustrator), Hodder Children's Books, 2018, 32 pages
These Olive Trees, Aya Ghanameh (author/illustrator), Viking Books for Young Readers, 2023, 40 pages
Hatchet, Gary Paulsen, Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, paperback 2006/originally published 1987, 192 pages
- Page 8: *The Shipping News*, Annie Proulx, Charles Scribners Sons, 1993, 352 pages
The Eight Mountains: A Novel, Paolo Cognetti, Washington Square Press, 2019, 224 pages
- Page 9: *Gold Fame Citrus: A Novel*, Claire Vaye Watkins, Riverhead Books, 2015, 352 pages
Miss Benson's Beetle, Rachel Joyce, Dial Press Trade Paperback, 2020, 368 pages
Celine, Peter Heller, Vintage (paperback), 2018, 352 pages
- Page 10: *Better Living Through Birding: Notes from a Black Man in the Natural World*, Christian Cooper, Random House, 2023, 304 pages
A Flat Place: Moving through Empty Landscapes, Naming Complex Trauma, Noreen Masud, Melville House, 2023, 256 pages
- Page 11: *One River: Explorations and Discoveries in the Amazon Rain Forest*, Wade Davis, Simon & Schuster, 1997, 544 pages
The Outermost House: A Year of Life on the Great Beach of Cape Cod, Henry Beston, Doubleday (originally published 1928), 256 pages
- Page 12: *Goodbye to a River: A Narrative*, John Graves, Vintage, 2002, (originally published by Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), 320 pages
- Page 13: *Paddling My Own Canoe: A Solo Adventure on the Coast of Molokai*, Audrey Sutherland, (illustrations by Yoshiko Yamamoto), Patagonia, 2018 (originally published 1978), 176 pages
The Flow: Rivers, Water and Wildness, Amy-Jane Beer, Bloomsbury Wildlife, 2022, 401 pages
- Page 14: *You are Here: Poetry in the Natural World*, Ada Limón, Milkweed Editions, 2024, 176 pages
Habitat Threshold, Craig Santos Perez, Omnidawn, 2020, 80 pages
The Poetry of Birds, Samuel Carr (editor), Batsford, 2023, 192 pages
- Page 15: *Wayfinding: The Science and Mystery of How Humans Navigate the World*, M.R. O'Connor, St. Martin's Press, 2019, 368 pages
The Museum of Whales You Will Never See: and Other Excursions to Iceland's Most Unusual Museums, A. Kendra Greene, Penguin Books, 2020, 272 pages
- Page 16: *Rooted: Life at the Crossroads of Science, Nature, and Spirit*, Lyanda Lynn Haupt, Little, Brown Spark, 2021, 240 pages
- Page 17: *Crossings: How Road Ecology is Shaping the Future of our Planet*, Ben Goldfarb, W.W. Norton, 2023, 384 pages
- Page 19: *The Last Fire Season: A Personal and Pyronatural History*, Manjula Martin, Pantheon, 2024, 354 pages
Fire Country: How Indigenous Fire Management Could Help Save Australia, Victor Steffensen, Hardie Grant Travel, 2020, 221 pages
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Advocate: A Graphic Memoir of Family, Community, and the Fight for Environmental Justice, Eddie Ahn (author/illustrator), Ten Speed Graphic, 2024, 208 pages

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Finding the Books Featured in the Guide

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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



tiniHabitat is an online resource of experiences and opportunities to connect more deeply with nature. A program of the University of Edinburgh's Global Health Academy, it recognizes the profound impact of nature on wellbeing. *Nature Book Guide* is thrilled to be a part of tiniHabitat's network. Looking for retreats, courses, experiences, and resources to connect with others? Website: tiniHabitat.com



Wild Women Writers' Salons happen online on the last Thursday of each month. Hosted by author and founder of Wild Women Press, Victoria Bennett and featuring guest authors of memoir and creative nonfiction, they are warm, welcoming, and thought-provoking, offering a space of intimate conversations between authors about their inspirations, ideas, and creative journeys. For more information and updates, please subscribe to the salon newsletter, wildwomansalons.substack.com -- and follow Victoria on Instagram @beewyld

Thanks and Acknowledgements

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

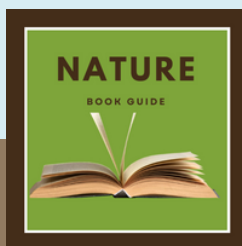
- Book Recommendation Panel members are the heart of this project. Friends, your recommendations and your work inspire us, illuminate us, educate, and entertain us. We couldn't put the *Guide* together without you.
- Ben Goldfarb and Suzanne Simpson, for giving us time and enthusiasm for your interviews, 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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