



# NATURE

## BOOK GUIDE

VOL. 2 ISSUE 3  
SPRING 2024  
[WWW.NATUREBOOKGUIDE.COM](http://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

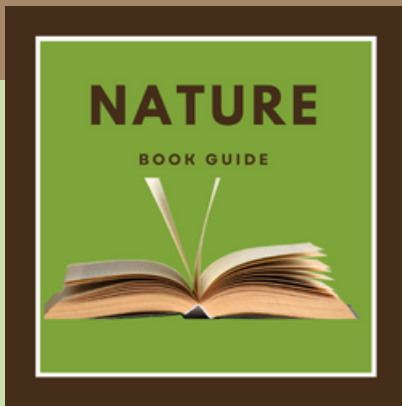
Books to illuminate, inform, challenge, and inspire care for our natural resources

# Contents



- 3 WELCOME**
- 4 BOOK RECOMMENDATION PANEL**
- 7 FOR THE CHILD IN ALL OF US**
- 9 INTERVIEW WITH AUTHOR DR. ITZUE W. CAVIEDES SOLIS**
- 11 FICTION**
- 14 POETRY AND WORKS BY POETS**
- 15 NONFICTION-- RACHEL CARSON, MEMOIR, HISTORIES, RAIN, CYCLING ADVENTURES**
- 22 EXPLORATION AND ADVOCACY**
- 23 TBR LIST, RESOURCES, THANKS, AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**





# Welcome, Readers!

And welcome to SPRING! I'm so glad you've found our *Guide* of great books about nature and climate recommended by fellow readers—who just happen to be naturalists, scientists, and stewards of our earth's resources.

Our panelists have access to some of the newest books in their disciplines and can point you to their favorites through *Nature Book Guide*.

We want to help you find the perfect book for YOU. Looking for an adventure memoir? A stroll through your library's stacks may not help. It is pretty easy to find a nonfiction science book in the Dewey Decimal 500s, but where are the novels and poetry and short story collections that address outdoor or environmental themes? How can you find books that intersect environmental advocacy with cultural issues or political issues? Some backlist and vintage books might be challenging to find in your local bookstore or library, but they're terrific reads, and still available for purchase through your favorite independent bookseller or online resource, or through interlibrary loan.



In this issue, we're thrilled to present an interview with author and herpetologist Dr. Itzue W. Caviedes Solis. Her children's book *Frogs: A Day in the Life* is so fun, and funny, and inspirational, we hope you'll download the entire interview from our website or read it on our blog. Her enthusiasm is infectious, and our conversation was SO MUCH FUN. We discovered Dr. Caviedes Solis as we worked on our Winter issue; she is the co-creator and editor of the inspiring *Women in Herpetology: 50 Stories from Around the World*. We found ourselves swooning over that book, 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

## Spring 2024 Contributors

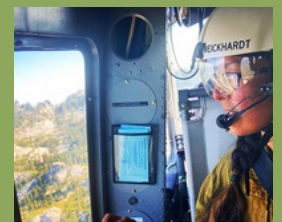
**Judith Westveer**, Ph.D., Assistant Director and Conservation Ecologist, Southern Plains Land Trust (SPLT) in Colorado, which has protected over 60,000 acres of prairie. Judith was born and raised in Amsterdam and holds a Ph.D. at the University of Amsterdam's Institute for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Dynamics as a Wetland Restoration Ecologist. She has worked for various environmental non-profit organizations in the Peruvian Amazon.



**Rich Reading**, Ph.D. is the Vice President of Science and Conservation at Butterfly Pavilion. Rich has a long record of wildlife research around the world; in 2020, he was recognized by the country of Mongolia with the highest award bestowed upon a non-citizen for his contribution to wildlife conservation. His current work includes research on the ecology and population dynamics of threatened species of native Mongolian Parnassius butterflies.



**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.



**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.



**Laura Mills**, Marketing and Communications Coordinator for Buffalo Bayou Partnership, the nonprofit organization creating and stewarding welcoming green space along Houston's most significant natural waterway. A writer and nature enthusiast, Laura spent 5 years as an independent bookseller at Brazos Bookstore and holds a Bachelor's degree in English and Creative Writing from Coe College in Cedar Rapids, IA.



# Guest Panelists



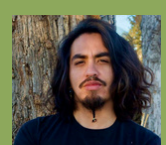
**James P. Stancil II**, is an educator and volunteer exposing new audiences to nature, conservation, ecology, and the joy and healing power of all things outdoors. He uses books as a critical tool and has formed a nonprofit organization promoting media literacy, digital citizenship, and the joy of reading in the Houston community and beyond. His *Nature by the Book* program recently hosted a book talk with Suzanne Simpson, author of *Wild Houston*, at the Houston Arboretum.



**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. In her free time, Noha enjoys traveling, cycling with her husband on their tandem bike, and reading fiction. She has read some classics of American literature in recent years, including several of Willa Cather's novels.



**Susan Shullaw** is a retired nonprofit executive who spent most of her career in higher education. Since 2011 she has served on the board of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, enabling her to play an active role in protecting and restoring the natural resources of Iowa, the most biologically altered landscape in the U.S.



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.

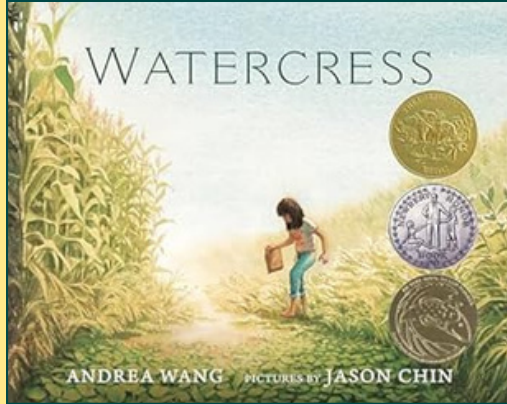
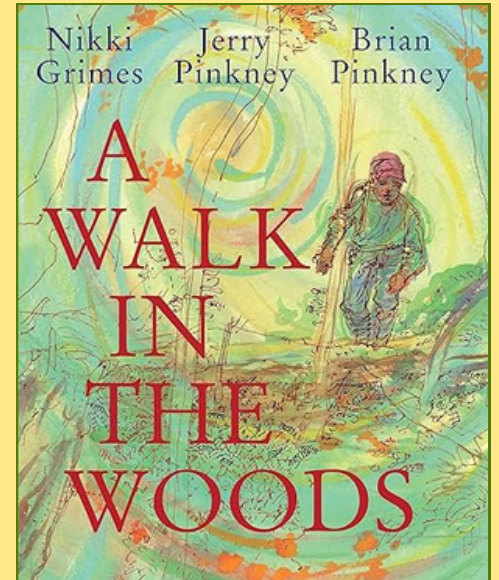
Learn more about our panel members at [www.naturebookguide.com/about](http://www.naturebookguide.com/about)

# For the Child in All of Us

*A Walk in the Woods*,  
Nikki Grimes (author), Jerry Pinkney and Brian Pinkney (Illustrators),  
Neal Porter Books, 2023, 40 pages  
**Reading Age: 4-8 years**

Still reeling from the death of his father, a boy is given an envelope. Inside is a map to a treasure in the woods behind their house. Why would his dad ask him to go back to their special place without him? *A Walk in the Woods* is an exquisite book about grief, gifts of love, and experiencing nature. The dream-like illustrations were begun by Caldecott Medal-winning Jerry Pinkney, who passed away during the creation of the book; they were completed by his son, Brian Pinkney.

**New York Times Best Children's Book of the Year,  
Smithsonian Magazine Best Children's Book of the Year,  
Kirkus Reviews Best Picture Book of the Year**



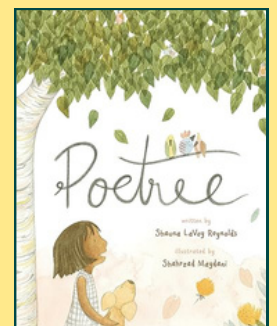
*Watercress*,  
Andrea Wang (Author), Jason Chin (Illustrator),  
Neal Porter Books, 2021, 32 pages  
**Reading Age: 6-9 years**

Driving through the Ohio countryside, a Chinese immigrant family stops to forage watercress growing along the road, much to the chagrin of their young daughter. "Ashamed of being ashamed" of her family, she struggles with being different. *Watercress* is a quiet, thoughtful book about the richness of memories and love for family.

**Caldecott Medal Winner, Newbery Honor Book, New York Times Best Children's Book of the Year**

*Poetree*, Shauna LaVoy Reynolds (Author), Shahrzad Maydani (Illustrator),  
Dial Books, 2019, 32 pages  
**Reading Age: 4-8 years**

Sylvia revels in the coming of spring and writes a celebratory poem to leave in a birch tree on her way to school. But when the tree appears to write back with a poem of its own, the excitement begins. Haiku, friendship, trees, and squirrels are celebrated in this charming book.





*The Secret Garden*, Frances Hodgson Burnett,  
originally published 1911/now in public domain, 186 pages



A classic of children’s literature and a worldwide favorite inspiring musicians, filmmakers, and artists for more than a century, *The Secret Garden* feels fresh even to today’s new readers. A recently orphaned girl finds herself living in a large English estate and discovers a long-forgotten garden hidden behind a locked door. Determined to bring the garden back to life, she defies the restrictive rules of the manor by escaping her room, making new friends, and bringing the garden back to life. *The Secret Garden* may be one of the most celebrated expressions of spring.

“In charmingly straightforward prose, Marta McDowell chronicles the life of Frances Hodgson Burnett through the many gardens she knew and loved. From the grand landscapes of Maytham Hall in Kent to a cottage garden in Bermuda, McDowell links these touchstones of Hodgson’s life to her most famous work: *The Secret Garden*. Beautifully illustrated with period photographs and artwork - and complete with a meticulously researched index of plants - *Unearthing the Secret Garden* is a delightful ode to a writer, her garden, and the story that inspired generations of readers to seek their own ‘bit of earth’ and watch it bloom.”

--Laura Mills



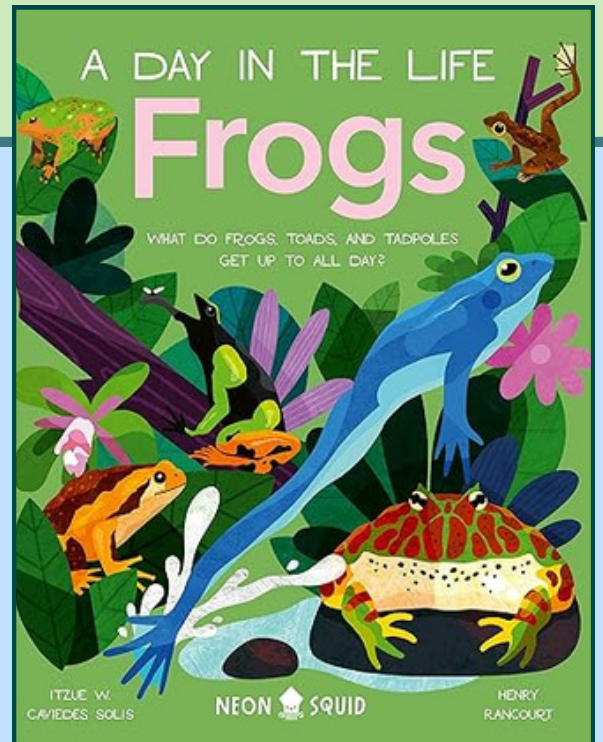
Recommended by Laura Mills,  
Marketing and Communications  
Coordinator, Buffalo Bayou Partnership

*Unearthing The Secret Garden: The Plants and Places  
That Inspired Frances Hodgson Burnett*,  
Marta McDowell, Timber Press, 2021, 320 pages



## An Interview with Author Itzue W. Caviedes Solis

*Frogs (A Day in the Life): What Do Frogs, Toads, and Tadpoles Get Up to All Day?,*  
Dr Itzue W. Caviedes Solis (Author),  
Henry Rancourt (Illustrator),  
Neon Squid, 2023,  
48 pages  
**Reading Age: 5-8 years**



Funny, joyful, and full of wonder, we loved *Frogs: A Day in the Life* so much we couldn't wait to visit with the author, herpetologist Dr. Itzue W. Caviedes Solis, a native of Mexico and assistant professor at Swarthmore College.

**You've shared that becoming a biologist is like "seeing the world with brand new glasses," making you aware of details you never noticed before. One of the things we love about your book is your knack for sharing amazing facts, such as frogs that turn blue or have see-through skin or create their own medicine. What's your favorite "fun fact" that you included in the book?**

It was hard for me to narrow down all the frogs I love and admire to a series of fun facts on 48 pages. To me they are all special.

Most people can picture a frog in their minds, but they do not know all the obscure details about them. My goal with this book is for kids and everyone to see the frogs with "brand new glasses." I select the fun facts hoping everyone at home will find a frog to connect to. We humans also have complicated dances, live in cozy burrows, and know dads that protect their little ones in their own ways. The fun facts in the book also provoke strong feelings. Imagine being a *Pipa pipa* mom with babies crawling out of your skin!

However, my favorite fun facts hide in the small things I learned while doing the research for the book:

1. I knew that toxic frogs acquire their toxins from eating arthropods, but I did not know arthropods acquire the toxins from the plants! And scientists do not know how they pass from one to the other!
2. My editor asked me to include a glass frog. Their translucent abdomens are cool but not my favorite. My favorite fact I learned about them is that the dads rotate their eggs with their hands for better growth and bring them water using their abdomen as a sponge to carry water.

And the fun facts keep coming; after the book was published a new article came out explaining how the glass frogs' blood is stored in their liver at night so they are even more translucent while they sleep! The more you read about frogs the more fun facts you can find!

**You write in *Women in Herpetology: 50 Stories From Around the World* that you see fewer people with your gender, race, and socioeconomic background working in science. You've also shared that you've received support from family, friends, and colleagues. What advice would you give parents who want to nurture their child's interest in science and choose it as a career?**

1. Promote exploration and curiosity. These are the pillars of science. There are many ways to get engaged with science that do not require money. For example, ask your kid early on questions about the natural world and help them find answers. Why do clouds look different every day? Did you know that tears are just filtered blood? I am currently living in Pennsylvania, so one more specific question that comes to my mind is, "Where does the salt in the road go after the snow is gone?" Give your kid an overload of salt on his tongue and ask what a worm, a fish, or a frog would feel when the salt is washing into their homes. Well, it turns out salt affects the sex of the frogs! So, it changes the number of males and females in a population. As a parent, you do not need to know all the answers. You can go to the public library and nowadays there are good YouTube channels to teach difficult concepts.

2. Acknowledge that learning is hard but keep a growing mindset. For example, if a kid says I am bad in math you can say, "You are not bad, you just don't know how to do this yet, but you will," or meet them halfway and show them there is a light on the other side: "When I was a kid, I also found it hard, but I eventually learned it."

3. Find role models for your kids. Representation matters. Depending on your own background, your demographics, and where you live this could be challenging. But showing them that someone like them can be a scientist is really important. There are also YouTube channels that help, and after-school programs or local museums or libraries that showcase a diverse group of people working in the sciences.

**What would you like young people to know about pursuing science or herpetology as a career?**

We need more people caring about the creatures that do not get a lot of attention. Herpetologists study amphibians and reptiles and they need you! They need you to learn about them and tell people to care about them. We need diverse voices: We need your voice, both in herpetology and the scientific community in general.

While pursuing a career in science there might be times when people will make you feel like you do not belong and that you are not good enough. There will be plenty of times that you will want to give up because of them. But I want you to remember that you are amazing: every bit that makes you you. You are not alone, and you deserve to be here. We want you to be part of the worlds of herpetology and science, and we are waiting for you to join our forces. Along the way you will also find people that will be your friends, that will have your back, and that will be there right with you. Find those people and care for each other.

**The full interview (with more fun facts and inspiration) is available on our blog or as a separate download from our website, [naturebookguide.com](http://naturebookguide.com).**

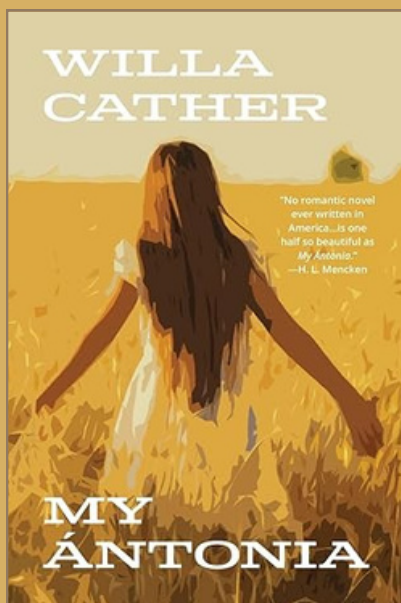


# Fiction

*My Ántonia*, Willa Cather,

First published 1918 Houghton Mifflin/Warbler Classics, 2022,

170 pages



## ***The Big Read Selection, National Endowment for the Arts***

"Willa Cather captures the landscape of Nebraska vividly in *My Ántonia*. That landscape is not simply a backdrop to the story Cather tells in the novel. Rather, it is central to the novel and part of Jim Burden's and Ántonia Shimerda's formative experiences. On a road trip to the West after I read *My Ántonia*, my husband and I drove through southern Nebraska and visited the National Willa Cather Center in Red Cloud, NE, the town on which the fictional town of Black Hawk in *My Ántonia* is based. Experiencing the landscape described in the novel on that trip felt like rereading parts of *My Ántonia*. This is a gripping and engrossing novel that centers on quintessentially American experiences and evokes a beautiful landscape."

--Noha Shawki



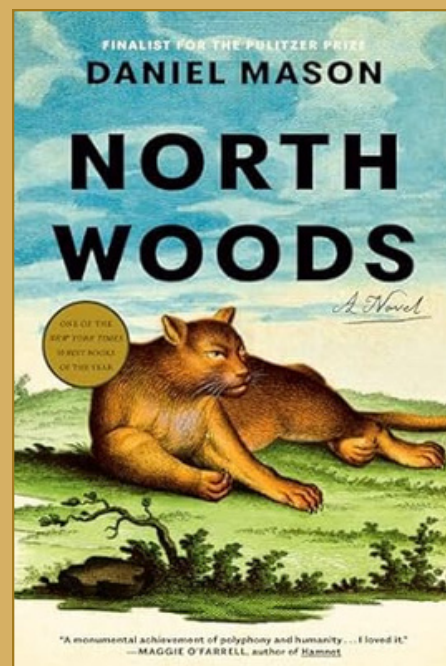
Recommended by Noha Shawki, Professor at Illinois State University, co-founder of the Center for a Sustainable Water Future

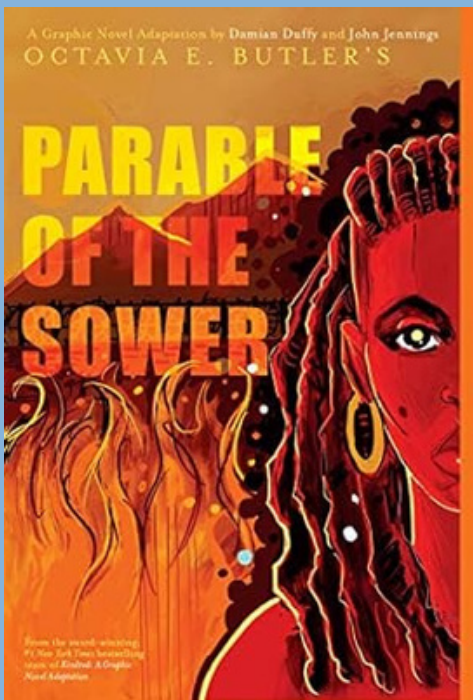
*North Woods: A Novel*, Daniel Mason,

Random House, 2023, 384 pages

**Finalist: National Book Critics Circle Award,  
One of the Best Books of the Year: New York Time Book Review,  
Washington Post's Ten Best Books of the Year**

Long after we're gone our secrets stay in the soil, in the wind, in the trees. In Daniel Mason's brilliant and magical novel, he connects us to the long-hidden past of a place. Lovers escape a Puritan colony, an English soldier grows apples in the New World, spinster twins are overcome with envy, and a heartsick artist yearns. Their stories all remain. The forest suffers, for over time, fire, wind, clearing for crops, and blight take their toll. While *North Woods* addresses the ephemeral nature of the world, we're taken by the richness and permanence of these characters in this landscape. We loved their stories; we loved this book.





## 2021 Hugo Award Winner for Best Graphic Story or Comic

*Parable of the Sower: A Graphic Novel Adaptation*, Octavia E. Butler (author), Damian Duffy (Adapter), John Jennings (Illustrator), Henry N. Abrams, 2021, 288 pages

**Reading Age: 13 years and up**

"In August, in Houston, I will be hosting a 'Nature by the Book' discussion on this graphic novel edition of the classic science fiction novel by African American writer Octavia Butler. This book is the second graphic novel adaptation of her work, following the New York Times #1 bestseller *Kindred*, authored by the same team. I'm recommending this book because it provides many a different perspective on nature, the outdoors, and multiple issues associated with environmental justice, and may be more accessible for reading and discussion for all ages through its graphic format. In 2024 (!), the America of *Parable of the Sower* suffers from extreme environmental and economic crises that our female protagonist is protected chiefly from in her 'gated' community. The echoing message of change and hope through religion may be prescient since the novel was released in 1993, especially considering much of our 21st-century history. You can decide how accurate Octavia Butler was and whether what else she wrote about in this novel is destined for our future. Envisioned as at least a trilogy, this book has a sequel, though a third was not finished before the author died in 2006. Bound to inspire discussion, I highly recommend *Parable of the Sower: A Graphic Novel Adaptation*."

--James P. Stancil II

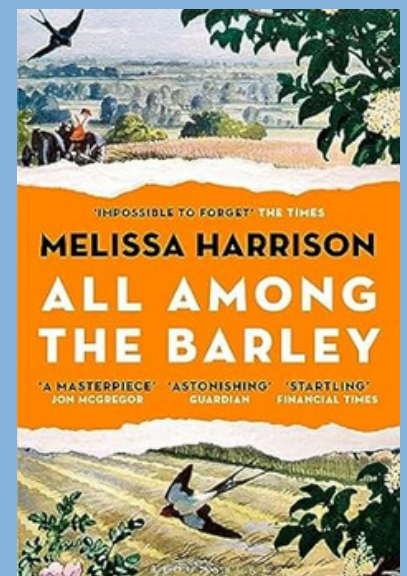


Recommended by James P. Stancil II, educator and outdoor volunteer, founder of Nature by the Book

*All Among the Barley*, Melissa Harrison, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019, 352 pages

**Book of the Year: New Statesman, Observer, Irish Times, BBC History Magazine; European Union Prize for Literature**

*All Among the Barley* is an astonishing story of rural England between the wars and is a slow burn of a novel with a shocking end. Teenager Edith June Mather lives on a farm on the cusp of change--the waning of folkways, the rise of mechanization and fascism, and shifting ideas about roles for women. Harrison writes lyrically about the beauty of nature and farm life and captures the harsh realities of the summer of 1933.

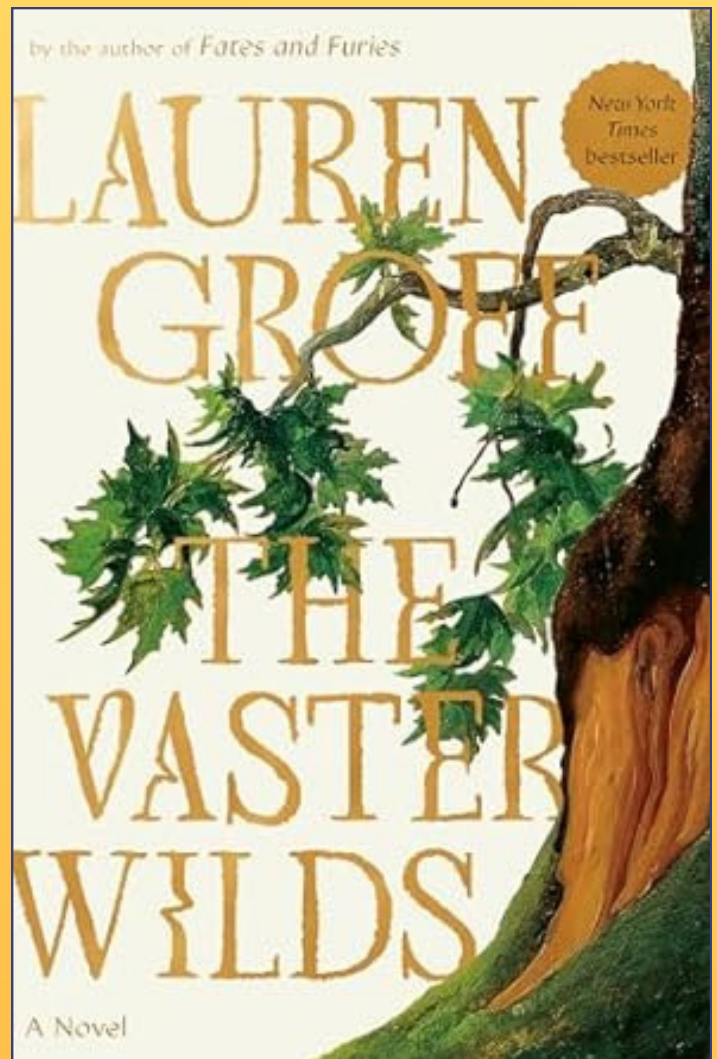




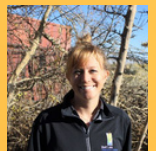
**New York Times Bestseller, One of Barack Obama's Favorite Books of 2023,  
A "Best Book of the Year: NPR, Time, Esquire, Vogue, LA Times, Slate**

*The Vaster Wilds: A Novel,*  
Lauren Groff,  
Riverhead Books, 2023, 272 pages

"Not often (or ever) do you come across a survivalist story written from the point of view and language of a 17th-century female. *The Vaster Wilds*, modern American novelist Lauren Groff's newest novel, is a truly sensory and visceral experience. The story follows a nameless young female protagonist who has recently escaped from the colonial colony at Jamestown which is under siege. The remainder of the story takes place in the 'wilds' of the eastern seaboard as the 'Girl' runs away from her past, towards nothing in particular. She must survive in the winter wilderness, seeking shelter in hollowed-out trees during ice storms, foraging for what little food she can find, and coping as the minimal supplies she has with her on the journey either get lost or damaged. Much like diving into a Shakespearean classic, this book takes some adjusting for the reader to orient themselves in the language and setting, which only enhances our connection to the protagonist's struggles. Groff's ability to describe setting and circumstance vividly brings the reader along through the journey in the wilderness, as well as through flashbacks that reveal the 'Girl's' backstory (servant life in London, miserable voyage from England, despair in Jamestown). This novel is a beautiful, dark, haunting read."  
--Rachel Hutchens



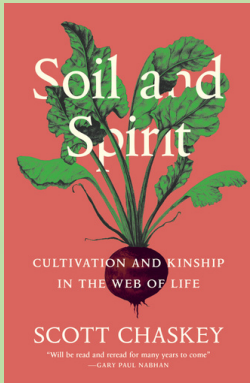
Recommended by Rachel Hutchens,  
Executive Director, Bluff Lake Nature Center



**"I know of few other writers whose sentences are so beautiful  
and so propulsive."  
--New York Times review**



# Poetry and Works by Poets



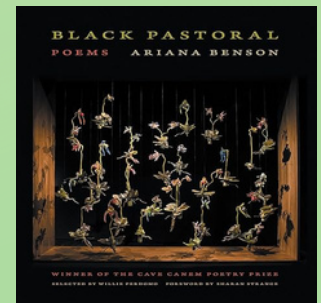
*Soil and Spirit: Cultivation and Kinship in the Web of Life*,  
Scott Chaskey, Milkweed Editions, 2023, 304 pages

In *Soil and Spirit*, you'll bicycle through the Irish landscape, attend a conference with farmers in China, and harvest amaranth seeds in New Mexico with poet Scott Chaskey, a pioneer in the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) movement and farmer of many decades. Chaskey's "inexhaustible ways of seeing" unfolds slowly but is well worth the time—a gift for gardeners impatiently waiting for their soil to warm in the spring sun.

## Winner, 2022 Cave Canem Poetry Prize

*Black Pastoral: Poems*, Ariana Benson,  
University of Georgia Press, 2023, 94 pages

Benson's brilliant debut collection links Black history with a tender connection to nature—vivid stories of the slaves' voyage to the New World, of escapes through swampland, of treks through the burning streets of America. Don't miss the notes at the end of *Black Pastoral* for enlightening historical context for these stunning poems.

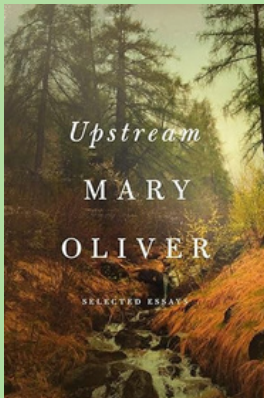


## Oprah Magazine's Ten Best Books of the Year New York Times bestseller

*Upstream: Selected Essays*,  
Mary Oliver, Penguin Press, 2016, 192 pages

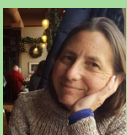
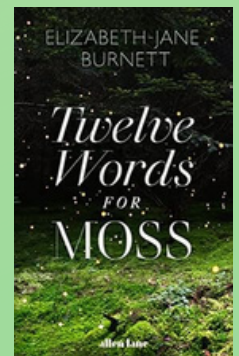
**"I had to go out in the world and see it and hear it and react to it, before I knew at all who I was, what I was, what I wanted to be."** —Mary Oliver

Beloved poet Mary Oliver addresses the responsibilities and beauty of a writer's life, her "friendship" with Walt Whitman, and her kinship with the natural world in this slender collection of essays. Oliver's fans won't want to miss this one.



*Twelve Words for Moss*, Elizabeth-Jane Burnett,  
Allen Lane/Penguin Random House UK, 2023, 178 pages

"I dip into *Twelve Words for Moss* when I seek reassurance. Burnett writes about the glimmering radiance of nature—most exquisitely about tenacious, resilient mosses—and about the grief she experienced losing her father. Having lost my own father recently, I find her essays are both soothing and beautiful." —Beth Nobles

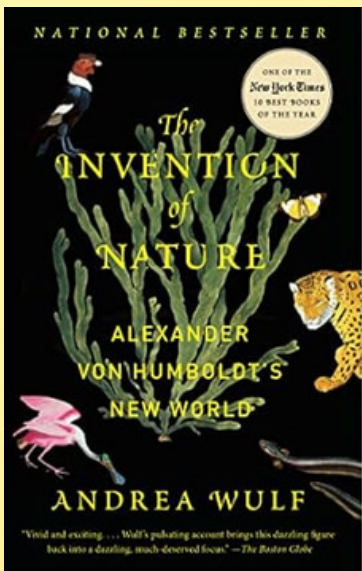


Recommended by Beth Nobles,  
Founder/Editor, Nature Book Guide

# Nonfiction

**Winner: Los Angeles Times Book Prize, James Wright Award for Nature Writing, Costa Biography Award, Royal Geographic Society's Ness Award, Sigurd F. Olson Nature Writing Award**

*The Invention of Nature: Alexander von Humboldt's New World*, Andrea Wulf, Knopf, 2015, 496 pages



Recommended by Judith Westveer,  
Assistant Director and Conservation Ecologist, Southern Plains Land Trust

"Imagine the world in 1769, the year that Alexander von Humboldt was born. Would it feel small, with so many places yet to be discovered - or would it feel big, with it taking weeks, months to travel to a different continent? Would being sent to a prestigious school feel like a privilege - or lonely, without much support from an emotionally distant mother? Would the Lutheran faith, with which von Humboldt grew up, feel like a comforting foundation - or a rather restrictive vision of life?"

"Whichever world von Humboldt grew up in, he definitely managed to think far beyond the established theories and has, ever since, served as a great inspiration for ecologists, philosophers and naturalists. Humboldt was one of the first to describe the theory that everything in nature is interconnected - a concept that he called 'Naturgemälde', and one that was outlined in a pioneering piece of data visualization in the form of his view of Mount Chimborazo in Ecuador.

"Andrea Wulf's book takes you on a journey through the incredible natural world that inspired von Humboldt, and into his brain and emotional world, where it was not all fun and games and amazing adventures."

--Judith Westveer

**Winner: 2023 Rachel Carson Environment Book Award  
and National Outdoor Book Award for Natural History Literature**

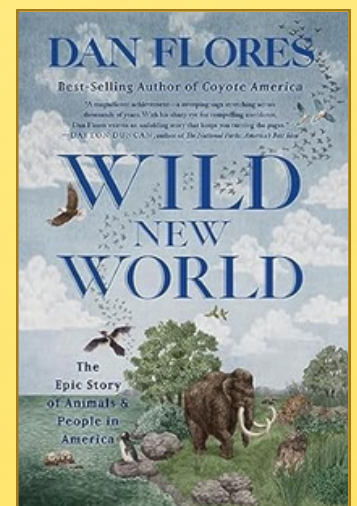
*Wild New World: The Epic Story of Animals and People in America*, Dan Flores, W.W. Norton & Co., 2022, 448 pages

"Dan Flores does it again, with an important and well written book about wildlife and, more specifically, the human impact on wildlife in North America (mostly the US). The book serves as a wakeup call for conservationists, who have too long overlooked the extent of humanity's continued impact on non-human animals and focused on just a few success stories. We have much to learn from our past interactions with wildlife if we hope to conserve and restore the natural world of this continent."

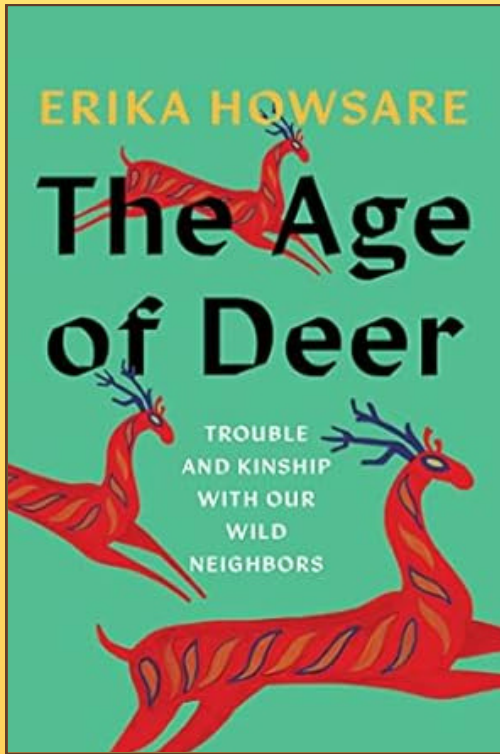
--Rich Reading



Recommended by Rich Reading, Vice President of  
Science and Conservation at Butterfly Pavilion







*The Age of Deer: Trouble and Kinship with our Wild Neighbors,*  
Erika Howsare, Catapult, 2024, 368 pages

"My favorite environmental writing examines not only nature itself but the way human biases and entanglements shape our environment. *The Age of Deer* does just this, beautifully confronting our folkloric attraction to deer and the practical nature of their abundance. From ancient cave paintings to high-fence hunting farms, Erika Howsare expertly navigates our complex relationship with deer, and the fragile space they occupy between cute forest creature and hunter's trophy. And in this portrait of a species, a deeper connection arises: we are all edge-dwellers, after all."

--Laura Mills

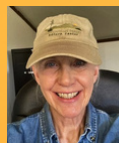


Recommended by Laura Mills,  
Marketing and Communications Coordinator,  
Buffalo Bayou Partnership

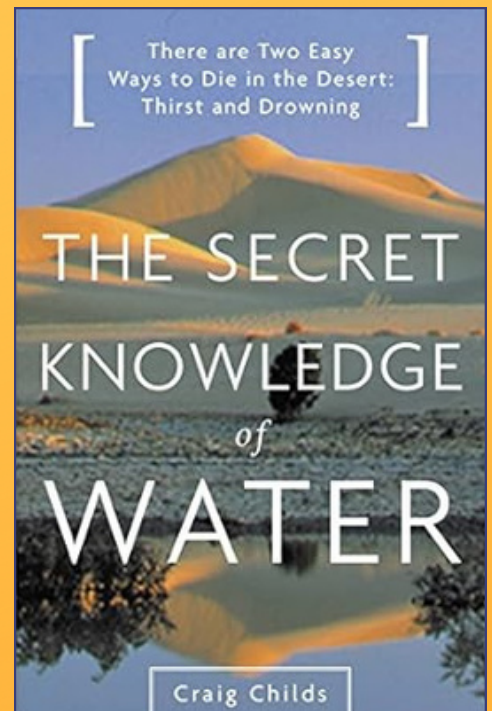
"To read *The Secret Knowledge of Water* is to embark on a heart-racing adventure while learning about the power, strength, and force of moving water. Childs' lyrical prose, and his vivid descriptions of everything he sees, smells, touches, and hears keep his reader on the edge of their seat as he explores a water source deep inside a cave, and in another instance, scrambles up the side of slick canyon walls to escape the rapidly rising waters. Moving water in a desert setting can be destructive and deadly, but resulting from its destructive path are smooth canyon walls and rocks of every size imaginable deposited further downstream - literally destroying in one instance and recreating the next. In the end, you have a renewed respect and awe for the powerful force of water in the desert."

--Lisa Fargason Gordon

Recommended by Lisa Fargason Gordon,  
Executive Director,  
Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute,



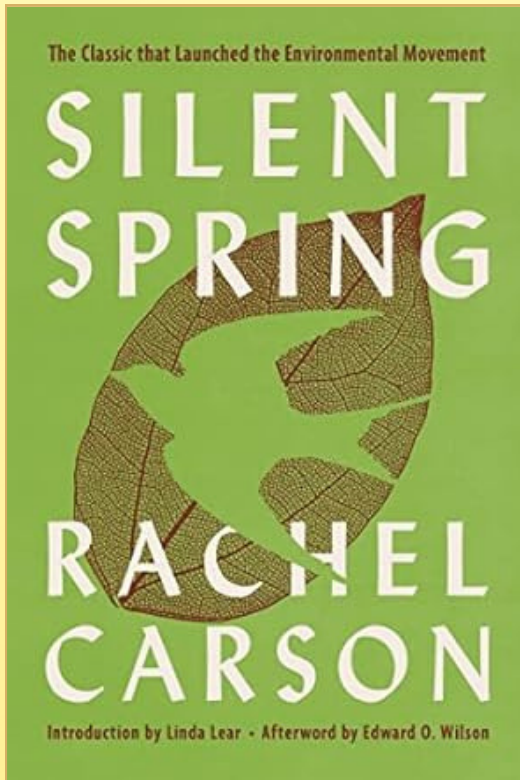
*The Secret Knowledge of Water:  
Discovering the Essence of the American  
Desert,* Craig Childs, Back Bay Books  
(paperback), 2001, 304 pages



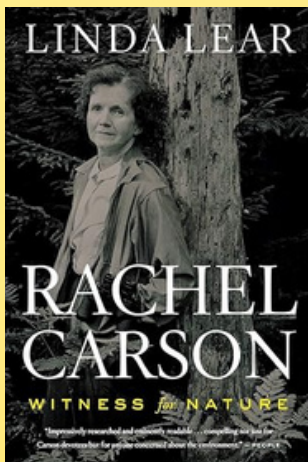


# Rachel Carson

**“One of the 25 greatest science books of all time” --Discover Magazine**  
**#5 on Modern Library List of Best 20th-Century Nonfiction**  
**National Review's 100 best non-fiction books of the 20th century**



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



*Rachel Carson: Witness for Nature,*  
Linda Lear,  
Originally published  
Henry Holt & Co, 1997/  
Mariner Books, 2009, 688 pages

*Silent Spring*, Rachel Carson,  
Originally published by Houghton Mifflin, 1962/  
Mariner Books Classics (paperback), 2022, 400 pages

“Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*, first published in 1962, is a classic for good reason. After the success of her beautiful ‘Sea’ trilogy, Carson turned to her last, greatest endeavor: bravely laying out the science of ecosystems threatened by human toxins, and calling for protection of the beloved environment she spent her life studying. In clear, lyrical prose, Carson shows beautifully and vividly that ‘everything is connected.’ Public response to the book spurred the banning of DDT in the US, and the creation of the EPA, but Carson’s real lessons go much deeper. It’s worth rediscovering as we face today’s challenges with water quality and climate change.

“I first read *Silent Spring* as a 7th grader, a few years after it came out (encouraged by my favorite teacher). It was life-changing, bringing a sense of urgency and advocacy to my love of nature. I’ve re-read it several times since, and each time I’m struck by how timely it still is. Her thoughtful, measured attention to understanding and managing substances that can cause so much harm, her concerns about nuclear testing, and her beautiful explanations of ecology are some of the quieter joys of her message of care for all of the earth.

“Carson’s life story—as a single mother, a scientist and writer, when those worlds were not always welcoming to women—is also fascinating. I highly recommend the biography, *Rachel Carson: Witness for Nature*, by Linda Lear.” --Susan Futrell



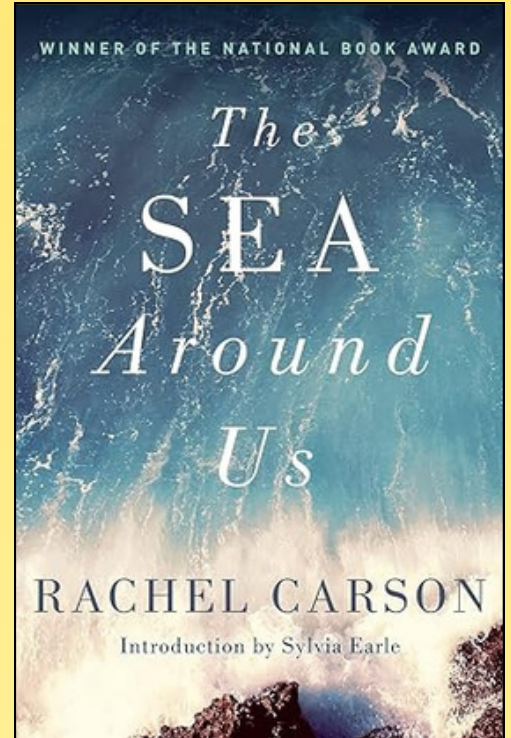
"It is often said that we know more about our solar system than our planet's own oceans. In 1951, drawing on her experiences working for the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Rachel Carson set out to understand these mysteries. The result is a comprehensive ode to our oceans, from their inception billions of years ago to the variety of creatures that call them home.

"In prose that seamlessly weaves science and poetry, Carson illuminates the sea's tides and wave formations, its power to shape land masses, and the way our own eyes recognize the blue of its waters. When I first picked it up I was expecting a scientific exploration of the sea, but I did not expect to find my own climate anxiety reflected across decades in the chapter about the sea as Earth's thermometer.

"A bestseller in its own time and winner of The National Book Award, *The Sea Around Us* is a lasting testament to science writing, even as it was eclipsed by Carson's more popular work, *Silent Spring*. It is a book as rich and deep as its subject matter, that offers much to discover for readers who care to venture beneath the surface."

### 1952 National Book Award Winner

*The Sea Around Us*, Rachel Carson, originally published 1951/3rd edition Oxford University Press, 2018, 256 pages



Recommended by Laura Mills, Marketing and Communications Coordinator, Buffalo Bayou Partnership



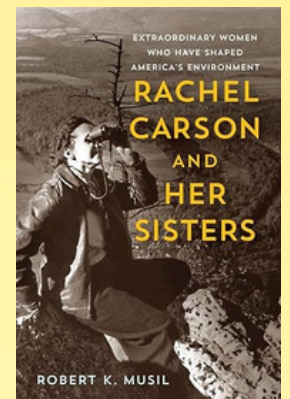
Seen: Rachel Carson (True Stories of Marginalized Trailblazers), Birdie Willis (Author), Rii Abrego (Illustrator), BOOM! Box, 2021, 80 pages

**Reading Age: 14-17 years**

A charming little book telling Rachel Carson's life story in graphic novel form. Includes teacher's guide pages covering the scientific and advocacy content of Carson's work, plus the principles of visual storytelling.

*Rachel Carson and Her Sisters: Extraordinary Women Who Have Shaped America's Environment*, Robert K. Musil, Rutgers University Press, 2015, 328 pages

An engaging and enlightening look at the impact of women environmentalists from Susan Fenimore Cooper to Devra Davis, Terry Tempest Williams, Sandra Steingraber, and Theo Colborn.



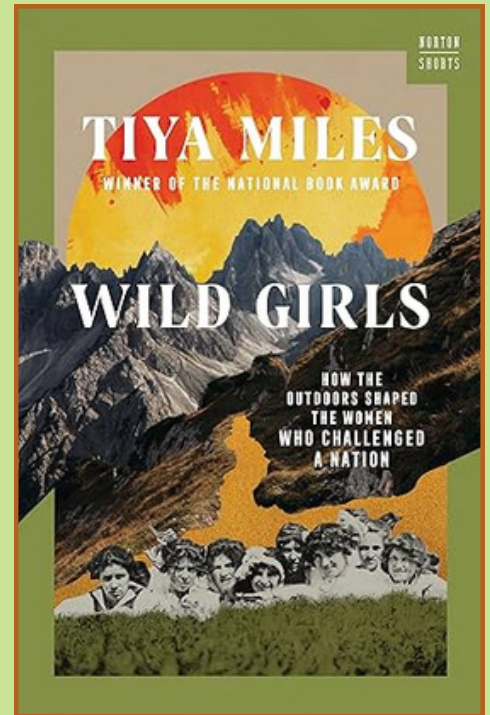
Recommended by Susan Shullaw, Board Member, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation

**New York Times Book Review Editors' Choice  
Publishers Weekly and New York Public Library Best Book of 2023**

*Wild Girls: How the Outdoors Shaped the Women Who Challenged a Nation*, Tiya Miles, W.W. Norton & Co., 2023, 192 pages

"One of the problems I have had my whole life with reading about history is how women, in particular, are always depicted from the 'single story.' Women sit quietly and sew, or they cook or, they learn piano or do their lessons. Rarely are they discussed in other contexts or shown to be more complex persons. *Wild Girls* gives us a richer picture of these women. For years I've read about Harriet Tubman, but never knew that part of her success was due to her in-depth knowledge of the woods, plants and animals that she was traversing as she brought people to freedom. I didn't know that Louisa May Alcott continually went outdoors and defied expectations of how a girl should act, or that there even was an Indigenous women's basketball team in the Midwest that left their homes to travel for sports. This book helps us toss those images of who and what women were in the past, and shows us that being outdoors, loving the land, being active is nothing new for women. We've been doing it all along!"

--Courtney Lyons-Garcia



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



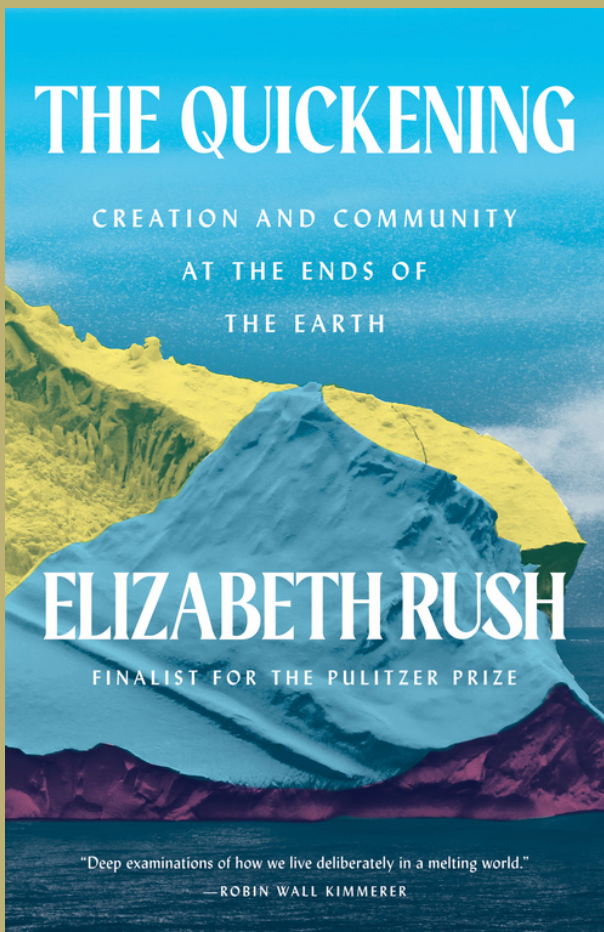
**Longlisted for the Wainwright Prize  
Finalist, National Geographic Traveller Reader Awards**

*Rain: Four Walks in English Weather*, Melissa Harrison,  
Faber & Faber, 2018, 128 pages

"I visited four parts of the countryside in showery weather and, when others looked apprehensively at the sky and went indoors, I put on my waterproofs and headed out--in some cases, several times. I have blended these expeditions with reading, research, memory and a little conjecture. ... This book does not pretend to be an exhaustive survey of the country's natural history during precipitation, and nor is it a purely scientific investigation into a meteorological phenomenon; instead, it's an imaginative account of how England--human, animal, and vegetable--weathers, and is weathered by, the storm."

--Melissa Harrison





**NPR Best Book of 2023,  
Shelf Awareness Best Nonfiction Book,  
August 2023 Indie Next Pick,  
WBUR Summer Reading Recommendation**

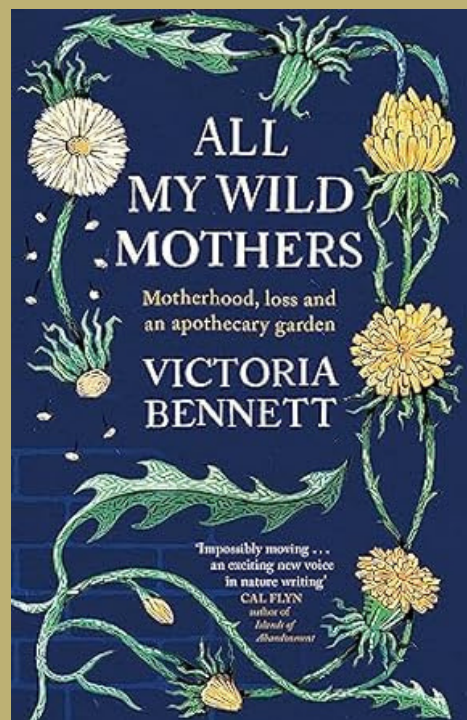
*The Quickening: Creation and Community at the Ends of the Earth,*  
Elizabeth Rush, Milkweed Editions,  
2023, 424 pages

Award-winning author, Elizabeth Rush is on board a research ship headed to Antarctica's Thwaites Glacier, which has never been visited by humans. Scientists are there to study the glacier's deterioration and the potential impact on the world's sea levels. Rush is also wrestling with a profound question: What does it mean to have a child in the face of escalating climate change? We loved *The Quickening* for Rush's keen descriptions of the voyage and adding her interviews with shipmates to the forefront--from the scientists to the cooks--about parenthood, their lives in science, and their experiences at sea. Rush builds community in these pages by bringing a chorus of voices to some of the critical issues of our time.

*All My Wild Mothers: Motherhood, loss and an apothecary garden*  
Victoria Bennett, Two Roads, 2023, 416 pages

**"So, plant the seed. Find the small thing worth the gift of your hope. Whatever else comes, trust that it will grow, even if you do not see it flower."**  
--Victoria Bennett

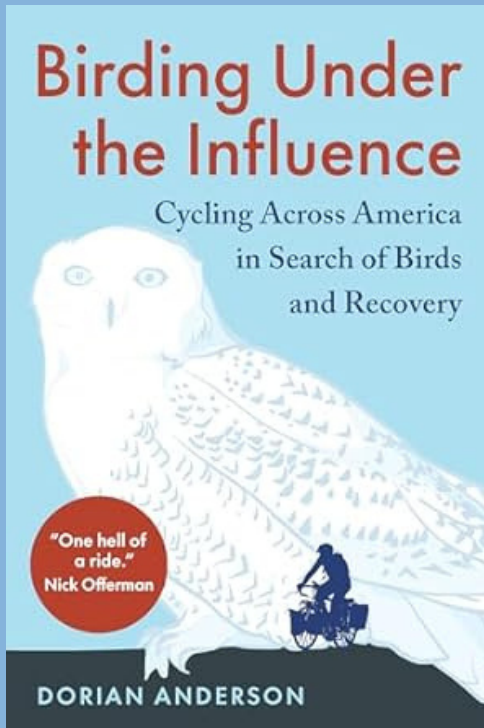
Victoria Bennett was seven months pregnant when her sister was tragically killed in a canoeing accident. Still grieving five years later, she moved to a new public housing estate with her son, where they plan to build a garden on a barren industrial site. Can a book about grief and loss and struggle be tender and joyful, too? Yes. Each short chapter of *All My Wild Mothers* begins with a profile of a "weed" in their garden--the mythology, uses, and folkways about the herbs and flowers Bennett and her son tended--followed by stories of their lives, joys, and successes.



# Cycling Adventures

*Birding Under the Influence: Cycling Across America  
in Search of Birds and Recovery,*

Dorian Anderson, Chelsea Green Publishing, 2023, 272 pages



"This 'Birding Big Year' book had been on my reading list since it came out, and it did not disappoint. While I had been looking forward to Dorian's stories about the birds he saw, the places he visited, and the wonderful people he met along the way, the best part of this book was actually the story of his personal journey.

"The way he intertwined the trials (and victories!) he endured while biking across America with his personal journey of sobriety created a beautiful and engaging story. I couldn't put it down. So yes, the birds and adventures are a delight, but the personal growth resonates on an even deeper level. I highly recommend adding *Birding Under the Influence* to your reading list."



--Shelly Plante

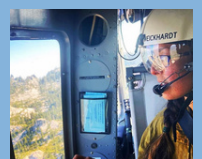
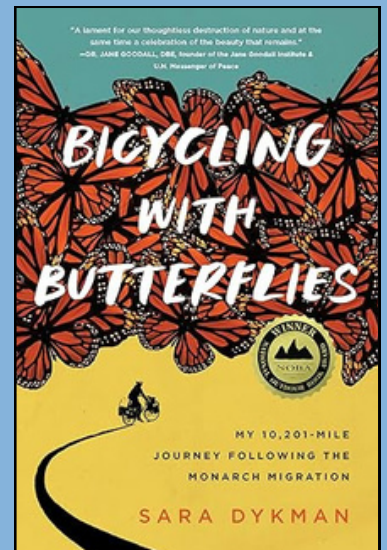
Recommended by Shelly Plante, Nature Tourism Manager  
for Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

## National Outdoor Book Award Winner

*Bicycling with Butterflies: My 10,201-Mile Journey Following the Monarch Migration,*  
Sara Dykman, Timber Press, (paperback) 2023, 280 pages

"Sara Dykman, a scientist and bona fide nature lover, gifts us inspiration and a call to action with her book, *Bicycling with Butterflies*, in which she recounts her incredible 10,201-mile 'Butterbiking' adventure. From Mexico, across the United States, to Canada, and BACK, she solo-biked with streams of Monarch butterflies, tracking their migration and spreading her infectious enthusiasm for Monarch conservation along the way. She even scheduled school visits throughout her almost 9-month adventure to educate youngsters about why Monarchs are so important to our natural world. As any long-distance bike ride will entail, Sara experienced her fair share of ups and downs, underscored by being a solo female rider, yet she persevered. Her perseverance shines throughout this book sparking hope that we can all do something to have a better impact on this planet and our fellow inhabitants."

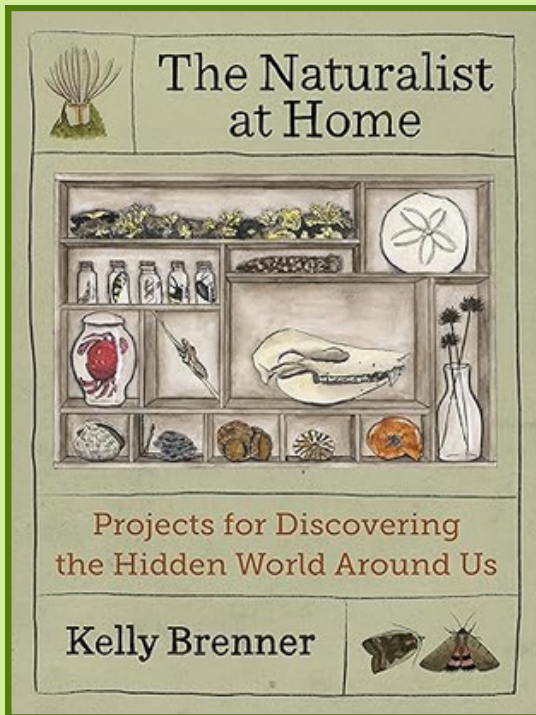
--Adrianna Weickhardt



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



# Exploration and Advocacy



*The Naturalist at Home: Projects for Discovering the Hidden World Around Us*,  
Kelly Brenner, Mountaineers Books, 2023, 224 pages

"I like books that clearly emphasize providing examples for readers with 'hands-on' opportunities in nature and outdoor settings, and *The Naturalist at Home* does that. I recommend this title because a wide variety (twenty) of activities and projects are included, with enough at the 'easy' level to keep readers of all skill levels interested and engaged. Topics range from activities with invertebrates, mushrooms, and even mammals. She adapted these exploration opportunities from actual fieldwork by naturalists and experienced research scientists. A personal favorite in the book was 'Learning the Language of Nature.' The author, Kelly Bruner, is a well-respected naturalist, writer, and artist based in Seattle. She also wrote the popular *Nature Obscura: A City's Hidden Natural World*. Check it out!"

--James P. Stancil

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

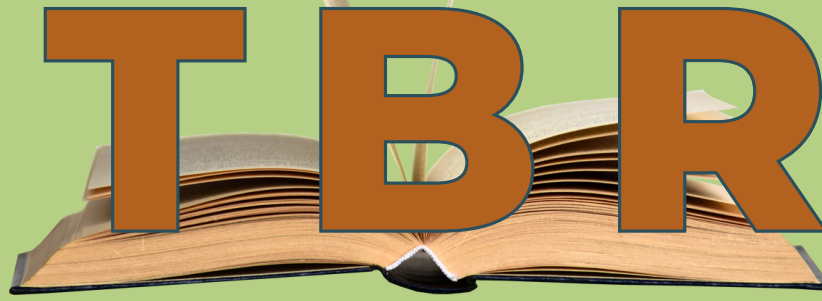
*One Green Thing: Discover Your Hidden Power to Help Save the Planet*,  
Heather Green, Harper Horizon, 2022, 304 pages

If you are a fan of self-administered personality tests like the Myers-Briggs and are searching for your niche in climate advocacy, *One Green Thing* may be the book for you! Author Heather White--a sustainability and eco-anxiety expert who has held leadership positions with Yellowstone Forever, Environmental Working Group, and National Wildlife Foundation--offers readers the "Service Superpower Assessment" with profiles linked to skills and attributes, such as The Adventurer, The Beacon, The Influencer, The Philanthropist, The Sage, The Spark, and The Wonk. For each category, she introduces the work of effective advocates, plus outlines a specific 21-day Kickstarter Plan. While *One Green Thing* seems like a simple book, the extensive note section reveals the depth of her research. Foreword by Erin Brockovich.





## "TO BE READ" BOOKS IN THE SPRING 2024 ISSUE



- Page 7: *A Walk in the Woods*, Nikki Grimes (author), Jerry Plnkney and Brian Pinkney (Illustrators), Neal Porter Books, 2023, 40 pages  
*Watercress*, Andrea Wang (Author), Jason Chin (Illustrator), Neal Porter Books, 2021, 32 pages  
*Poetree*, Shauna LaVoy Reynolds (Author), Shahrzad Maydani (Illustrator), Dial Books, 2019, 32 pages
- Page 8: *The Secret Garden*, Frances Hodgson Burnett, originally published 1911/now in public domain, 186 pages  
*Unearthing The Secret Garden: The Plants and Places That Inspired Frances Hodgson Burnett*, Marta McDowell, Timber Press, 2021, 320 pages
- Page 9: *Frogs (A Day in the Life): What Do Frogs, Toads, and Tadpoles Get Up to All Day?*, Dr Itzue W. Caviedes Solis (Author), Henry Rancourt (Illustrator), Neon Squid, 2023, 48 pages
- Page 11: *My Ántonia*, Willa Cather, first published 1918 Houghton Mifflin/Warbler Classics, 2022, 170 pages  
*North Woods: A Novel*, Daniel Mason, Random House, 2023, 384 pages
- Page 12: *Parable of the Sower: A Graphic Novel Adaptation*, Octavia E. Butler (author), Damian Duffy (Adapter), John Jennings (Illustrator), Henry N. Abrams, 2021, 288 pages  
*All Among the Barley*, Melissa Harrison, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019, 352 pages
- Page 13: *The Vaster Wilds: A Novel*, Lauren Groff, Riverhead Books, 2023, 272 pages
- Page 14: *Soil and Spirit: Cultivation and Kinship in the Web of Life*, Scott Chaskey, Milkweed Editions, 2023, 304 pages  
*Black Pastoral: Poems*, Ariana Benson, University of Georgia Press, 2023, 94 pages  
*Upstream: Selected Essays*, Mary Oliver, Penguin Press, 2016, 192 pages  
*Twelve Words for Moss*, Elizabeth-Jane Burnett, Allen Lane/Penguin Random House UK, 2023, 178 pages
- Page 15: *The Invention of Nature: Alexander von Humboldt's New World*, Andrea Wulf, Knopf, 2015, 496 pages  
*Wild New World: The Epic Story of Animals and People in America*, Dan Flores, W.W. Norton & Co., 2022, 448 pages
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*Rachel Carson: Witness for Nature*, Linda Lear, originally published Henry Holt & Co, 1997/Mariner Books, 2009, 688 pages
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*One Green Thing: Discover Your Hidden Power to Help Save the Planet*, Heather Green, Harper Horizon, 2022, 304 pages

## Finding the Books Featured in the Guide

We love libraries and independent booksellers; in fact, they're our primary resources for locating books. Many libraries offer interlibrary loans 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](http://landlibrary.wordpress.com) Instagram: @landlibrary



Climathon 2024 is a year-long readathon of books about nature, the environment, and climate co-hosted by YouTubers Ania (@welltraveledbooks) and Tasmin (@tasmetu), a German author and poet living on the Azores Archipelago. The Climathon 2024 Bingo Card is available free of charge via the Downloads tab of our website. It has no order and is meant as a guide for a fun and meaningful year of reading!



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

## Thanks and Acknowledgements

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

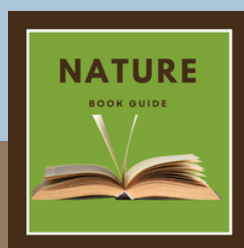
- Book Recommendation Panel members are the heart of this project. Friends, your recommendations and your work inspire us, illuminate us, educate, and entertain us. We couldn't put the *Guide* together without you.
- Dr. Itzue W. Caviedes Solis, for giving us time and enthusiasm for your interview, thank 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*

## Keeping in Touch

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