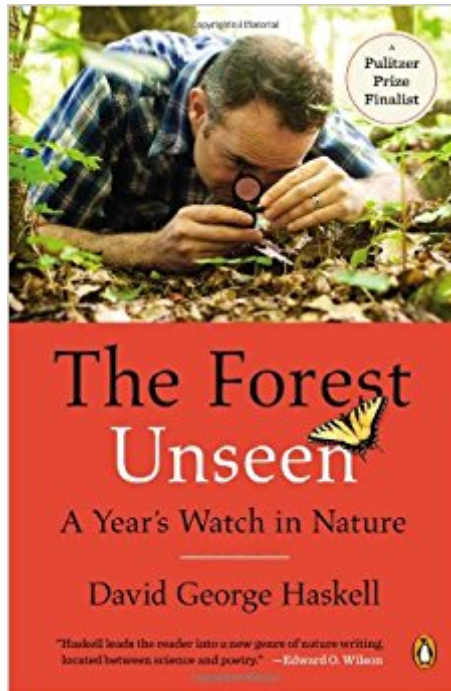


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# The Forest Unseen: A Year's Watch In Nature



## Synopsis

A biologist reveals the secret world hidden in a single square meter of old-growth forest--a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and the Pen/E.O. Wilson Literary Science Writing Award. Look out for David Haskell's new book, *The Songs of Trees: Stories From Nature's Great Connectors*, coming in April of 2017. In this wholly original book, biologist David Haskell uses a one- square-meter patch of old-growth Tennessee forest as a window onto the entire natural world. Visiting it almost daily for one year to trace nature's path through the seasons, he brings the forest and its inhabitants to vivid life. Each of this book's short chapters begins with a simple observation: a salamander scuttling across the leaf litter; the first blossom of spring wildflowers. From these, Haskell spins a brilliant web of biology and ecology, explaining the science that binds together the tiniest microbes and the largest mammals and describing the ecosystems that have cycled for thousands- sometimes millions-of years. Each visit to the forest presents a nature story in miniature as Haskell elegantly teases out the intricate relationships that order the creatures and plants that call it home. Written with remarkable grace and empathy, *The Forest Unseen* is a grand tour of nature in all its profundity. Haskell is a perfect guide into the world that exists beneath our feet and beyond our backyards.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Very much a contemporary biologist in his familiarity with genetics and population ecology, he also has the voracious synthetic imagination of a 19th-century naturalist. ...a sensitive writer, conjuring with careful precision the worlds he observes and delighting the reader with insightful turns of

phrase." The Wall Street Journal. "...as beautiful a book as I've read in years...I can't remember the last time I encountered so much spiritual wisdom, ecological intelligence and contagious love for the grandeur of life..." Chattanooga Times Free Press. "Brimming with sensual details, when Haskell's modest patch of turf removes its glasses, it's as sexy as Marian the Librarian." Atlanta Journal and Constitution. "An extraordinary, intimate view of life... Exceptional observations of the biological world..." Kirkus Reviews, Starred Review for "books of remarkable merit." "Mixing poetry with natural history, he follows subtle scientific threads...to conclusions of gratifying breadth." Conservation Magazine. "Haskell leads the reader into a new genre of nature writing, located between science and poetry, in which the invisible appear, the small grow large, and the immense complexity and beauty of life are more clearly revealed." (E. O. Wilson, Harvard University ) "David Haskell trains his eye on a single square meter of Cumberland Plateau, and manages in the process to see the whole living planet as clearly as any writer in many years. Each chapter will teach you something new!" (Bill McKibben, author Eearth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet ) "In the style of Aldo Leopold, John Muir, and Thoreau, David Haskell has capture the beauty and intricacy of evolution in these pages. For those who are looking for inspiration to spend more time in the wild, this book is the perfect companion. Haskell's vast knowledge of the forest and all its creatures is the perfect guide to exploring wilderness. The prose is a perfect match for the poetic tranquillity found through the study of nature. A true naturalist's manifesto." (Greg Graffin, author of Anarchy Evolution ) a welcome entry in the world of nature writers. He thinks like a biologist, writes like a poet, and gives the natural world the kind of open-minded attention one expects from a Zen monk rather than a hypothesis-driven scientist. • The New York Times

David Haskell's work integrates scientific, literary, and contemplative studies of the natural world. He is a professor of biology and environmental studies at the University of the South and a Guggenheim Fellow. His 2012 book *The Forest Unseen* was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and the PEN/E.O. Wilson Literary Science Writing Award, and won the 2013 Best Book Award from the National Academies, the National Outdoor Book Award, and the Reed Environmental Writing Award. Along with his scholarly research, he has published essays, op-eds, and poetry.

I normally devour books. Some novels I finish in less than two days. I spent 2 months reading this book. I did this because it made me think. When the author talked about screws I didn't just move on, I thought about them and looked up some information on Wikipedia. I would read a chapter and think on it before starting the next chapter. A great read, but not one I recommend going through

quickly.

Fascinating look at all aspects of life in a small area in the forest in Tennessee. The writing is excellent, it made me feel the same calm I would encounter in the forest, breathing in all the richness. As a botanist, the discussions of animal life, from caterpillars to deer were informative and very interesting. And the discussions of plant life were enriching and beautiful.

Just received. Am glad I don't judge a book by its cover because the cover was cut short of the page edge on both front and back. A bit surprised it passed quality inspection, assuming there is one. When I worked for a major book seller, this wouldn't have made the "cut". Five stars are for the content which I'm sure will be a 10 star read.

I gave this book to my husband, who is a forester, for Christmas. He started reading it with some scepticism, thinking it would be a sappy story about nature. After the first page, he was hooked and hasn't been able to put it down. He thought he knew the woods and now he sees it through new eyes. He would give it 6 stars, if he could.

Comfort, peace and enlightenment are all available to you right here. If you live near a woods or ever take a walk in the woods this book will improve your appreciation of each moment. The author begins as a scientific expert, though his ultimate value in this form is his gift as a writer. I love to read his daily installments at the end of my day, go to sleep, and peacefully dream.

This is definitely a masterful work by a naturalist-poet. It diarizes a year of observing a small patch of Tennessee forest. Haskell digs down, sometimes literally, with rich scientific details that often amazed me. Generous endnotes provide further reading for the curious, without bogging down the sense of discovery. But like the soaring prose, each short chapter transcends the particular focus of attention which at first may seem trivial. The discussion zooms from microscopic soil inhabitants to macroscopic, even spiritual issues like man's place in nature and the limits of the scientific method. I feel this book certainly deserves five stars. But I could see how it may not be as appreciated by those who like their nature guides straight up, without metaphorical flourishes. Younger readers come to mind. In this regard, the quotation on the front cover claiming that it represents a new genre of poetic nature writing seems a little stretched. Haskell certainly looks at the forest in a way similar to Bernd Heinrich and Diana Beresford-Kroeger, for example. However,

his prose is more artful than that of the former, and his observations more grounded and detailed than those of the latter, who's The Global Forest I have admired in another review. It may not be a new genre, but I look forward to it growing.

The book is great. It described and explained a lot of inner workings of the natural world. One gripe I have about it is that I wished there was more visual aid. Perhaps a companion web site or more visual information in the book itself. Often I found myself reading next to my laptop so that I can look up the things the author was talking about.

This book is organized around a year of close observations of a single square meter of forest floor at the edge of the Cumberland Plateau, TN, in a beautiful area near which our family hiked and camped for many years. Haskell uses this tiny plot as a springboard to reach topics ranging from the microscopic and molecular to the global--illuminating the incredible complexity of living systems and their interrelatedness to each other and to their inanimate environment. He does an excellent job of folding in the many recent and amazing developments in the biological sciences that have taken place in recent years; biology has certainly taken a Great Leap Forward the last few decades! The format of the book is a set of short chapters, almost vignettes, covering the full year, each initially focusing on Haskell's square meter plot and then developing the plot's relationships to the rest of the fascinating biosphere in which Haskell's critters live and die. A scientist, Haskell writes like a poet, by no means a common accomplishment. His writing is not elaborate, florid, or ostentatiously elegant--it is just beautiful.

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