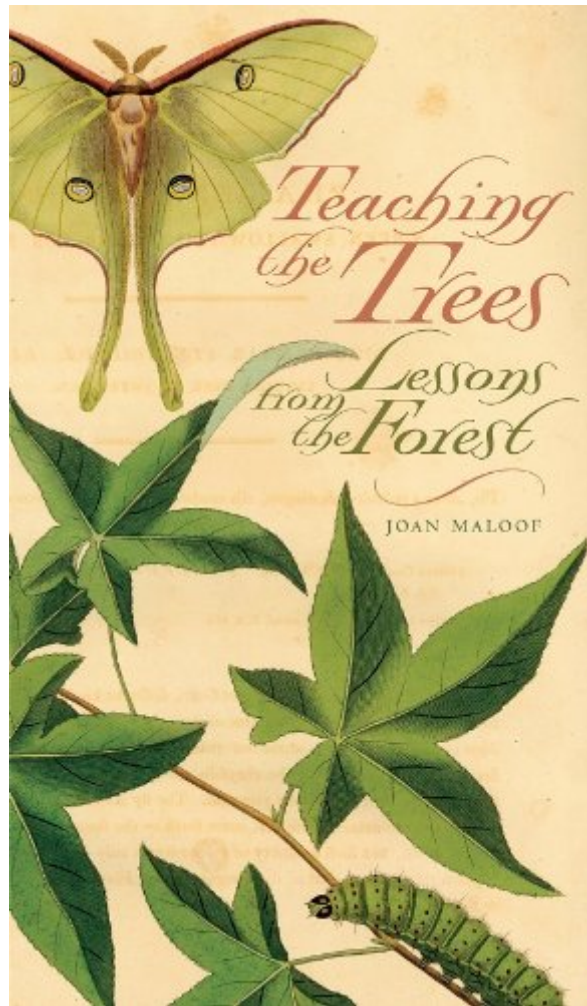


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Teaching The Trees: Lessons From The Forest



Synopsis

In this collection of natural-history essays, biologist Joan Maloof embarks on a series of lively, fact-filled expeditions into forests of the eastern United States. Through Maloof's engaging, conversational style, each essay offers a lesson in stewardship as it explores the interwoven connections between a tree species and the animals and insects whose lives depend on it—and who, in turn, work to ensure the tree's survival. Never really at home in a laboratory, Maloof took to the woods early in her career. Her enthusiasm for firsthand observation in the wild spills over into her writing, whether the subject is the composition of forest air, the eagle's preference for nesting in loblolly pines, the growth rings of the bald cypress, or the gray squirrel's fondness for weevil-infested acorns. With a storyteller's instinct for intriguing particulars, Maloof expands our notions about what a tree is—through her many asides—about the six species of leafhoppers who eat only sycamore leaves or the midges who live inside holly berries and somehow prevent them from turning red. As a scientist, Maloof accepts that trees have a spiritual dimension that cannot be quantified. As an unrepentant tree hugger, she finds support in the scientific case for biodiversity. As an activist, she can't help but wonder how much time is left for our forests.

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Customer Reviews

In this slender volume of short essays, gracefully accompanied by the illustrations of 19th century naturalist and artist John Abbot, Maloof makes her impassioned plea for the lives of trees and forests by introducing them to us one by one. Local rambles in Maryland provide the settings for her meditations on the lives and strategies of common species like beech, oak, maple, pine, and sycamore and under story trees like dogwood and holly, as well as bald cypress, walnut, redcedar, sweetgum and more. She breathes in the special qualities of "old-growth" air and mourns the lack of "grandfather trees," but most fascinating are the tales of interwoven life in the trees. Many of these have to do with insects. Black locusts produce extra nectar, which feeds the ants and ladybugs that protect the tree from other insects. Except aphids, which the ants protect in exchange for their "honeydew," a euphemism for aphid urine. Ladybugs eat aphids, but there are still plenty of them and that honeydew is also the substance found all over your car when you park it under a tree, that stuff you probably call sap. Exploring the teeming life of a tree (without the sycamore alone nine other species would be lost) Maloof, a biologist, distills numerous studies and traces the relationships among the insects, lizards, fungi, mammals, birds and people who obtain benefit from the tree. With a winning combination of science and poetry, Maloof makes her case for compassion and wonder.--Portsmouth Herald

When I was young, my neighbor told me that when she was a child in early 20th century Philadelphia, she thought that a tree was a particular kind of plant and that was that. Imagine her amazement the first time she left the city and discovered that there were what seemed to be an infinite variety of trees! Joan Maloof takes the reader to the next level. She explains that far from each tree being merely a unique organism, that each tree is an entire ecosystem; indeed, that each tree is an interdependent universe of organisms that depend on each other in the most unimaginably wonderful and intricate ways. I have spent my entire life in a rural area surrounded by trees, yet reading this book awakened a new curiosity, a new appreciation, a need to explore and learn that I never felt before. Anyone will be enriched by reading "Teaching the Trees", but for the young person steeped in consumer culture who thinks that trees are for shade or lumber and that "bugs" are pests, it could be a life-changing experience, leading to an appreciation of the wonders of the forest, and perhaps a lifetime of study and enjoyment of the miracles of nature.

This is one of those books you read and it can change your life. It's an intellectually beautiful read by a biologist who has spent her life studying the relationship of trees, forests, organisms, insects

and animals and explains their connections simply. I think it's an important book such as Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring". It should be in everyone's library and read over and over. Tiia-Mai Barrett, Seattle, WA

Biologist Joan Maloof's ventures into the forests of the Eastern United states provide a series of lively, scientific essays on connections between tree species and the animals and insects which use it in Teaching The Trees: Lessons From The Forest. In leaving lab for direct environmental observation, Maloff's firsthand observations are lively and personal as well as scientific, exploring some of her favorite trees and their importance.

This is the type of book you savor, that you close your eyes at the end and feel you've received a special gift. I'm buying copies for my friends and family.

I'm a tree lover, and I love to read and learn. This is an unusually good book blending narrative, experiences, and a love for the forest. I am hopeful other books will live up to how pleasurable and rewarding this was to read, but few do.

I liked Ms. Maloof's steady, lighthearted pace in combination with her informative style. I would recommend this book to anyone who enjoys time in the woods and the feel of the forest. I chose this rating because every time I stopped reading I could hardly wait to begin again.

I loved this book which is so simple and sweet and with a powerful message. How sad that these beautiful, ancient forests are being cut down so that pine forests which are fast growing can be planted in their wake. Tragic! I loved the way Joan Maloof shared her experience of the trees she loves so much. She also showed the interconnectedness of all the plant and animal species and how dependent they are on the trees. The trees need them too.

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