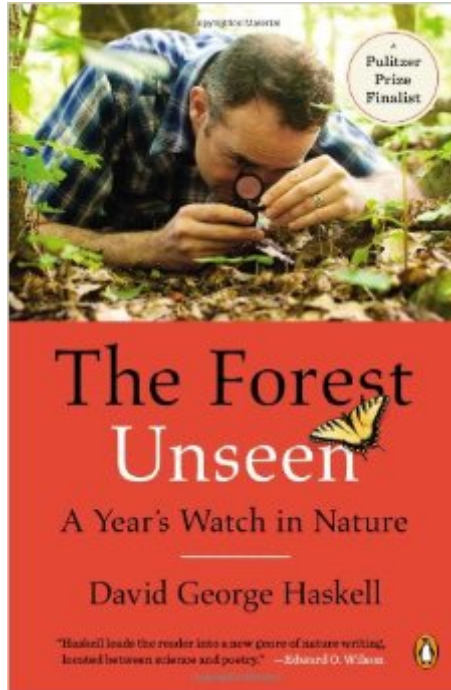


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# The Forest Unseen: A Year's Watch In Nature



## Synopsis

Winner of 2013 Best Book Award from the National Academies. Finalist for 2013 Pulitzer Prize in General Nonfiction. Winner of the 2013 Reed Environmental Writing Award. Winner of the 2012 National Outdoor Book Award for Natural History Literature. Runner-up for 2013 PEN/E. O. Wilson Literary Science Writing Award. A biologist reveals the secret world hidden in a single square meter of forest—Written with remarkable grace and empathy, *The Forest Unseen* is a grand tour of nature in all its profundity. Biologist David George 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. Beginning with simple observations—a salamander scuttling across the leaf litter, the first blossom of spring wildflowers—Haskell spins a brilliant web of biology, ecology, and poetry, explaining the science binding together ecosystems that have cycled for thousands—sometimes millions—of years.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

One of the best natural history oriented books I've read in the past several years. Using a one square meter patch of Tennessee old growth forest as the object of his contemplation, and returning to it frequently throughout the year, the author shows us natural phenomena we'd otherwise have overlooked. Haskell emphasizes the interconnectedness of humble organisms such as fungi and soil-inhabiting arthropods as well as the more familiar birds and mammals we're more likely to notice. You will be inspired to take a much closer look during your next outing into nature.

Great book. I read, re-read and then bought the hard back copy to have one for the shelves. Will continue to re-read. Extremely well written and insightful. Each paragraph is charged with poetic information and deep understanding of the eco-system. I found the book absorbing.

Outstanding, a joy to read. The story is presented as a series of daily observances of a small section of old growth forest. Each daily narrative is driven by what was taking place during each visit. The author clearly explains these goings on and how they effect the larger ecosystem, from season to season, fungus to large mammals.

I am giving this book to my most discerning, nature-loving friends. In thoughtful, short essays, the author teaches us to observe the interconnections of nature. He interweaves botany with many levels of poetic associations with other realms of knowledge such as history and philosophy. I love this book!

"The Forest Unseen" is full of the most insightful observations I've seen in a book of it's nature. David Haskell has the background plus the forests love to describe in minute detail what lies hidden from our view. His passion is contagious and even for nature lovers and teachers, there's much to be learned from this book.

I rushed to buy this book after a friend described the project to me: carefully observing a small plot of soil in a Tennessee forest for a year, and exploring all the interconnections thus revealed. And indeed there's much to be learned from this book, both spiritually and scientifically. And yet it becomes a bit tedious, I think because the writing style often lapses into the flat and pedantic. It's not particularly inspired nature writing. This book needs to be put in a crisper.

David Haskell does a masterful job of describing complex natural systems in very readable and accessible terms. His writing transports the reader to that seemingly tranquil spot in the old growth forest, only to discover fascinating layers of physiological and ecological activity and interrelationships.

Haskell's "The Forest Unseen" is a wonderful approach to 'nature writ small'. I very much enjoyed his focus on a small patch of ground through the seasons. It is too bad that some of his writing appears to suffer from the vertebrate bias that is so pervasive in our society, and even within

university biology departments. For example, he writes "The soil's food web reaches its zenith in the shrew. Only owls will eat shrews; everything else gives them a wide berth..." A truly unbiased biologist would never forget that all vertebrates are food for an enormous diversity of invertebrates. I'm sure there are lice, fleas, mites, and ticks that feed on shrews regularly (not sure if a shrew ever slows down long enough for a mosquito to get a bite but maybe a blackfly or a no-see-um could drink some shrew blood). That these animals don't kill shrews matters little when tracking energy and nutrient flow through a food web. When a shrew dies it is the blowflies that find them first, or perhaps some lucky carrion beetles. Well over a dozen species of animals consider shrews to be food but because these animals are not vertebrates they are second-class citizens and often ignored. Haskell does include mentions here and there of invertebrates in his study plot and I hope one or more chapters I have yet to read will go into greater depth into their fascinating lives [After having finished the book, I withdraw this criticism, Haskell devoted entire, well written, chapters to inverts]. This issue aside, Haskell's book is a wonderful read and should excite many that one doesn't need to travel to exotic nature refuges - within a single square meter of many backyards there is enough diversity and biological wonder to keep you enthralled for a long long time.

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