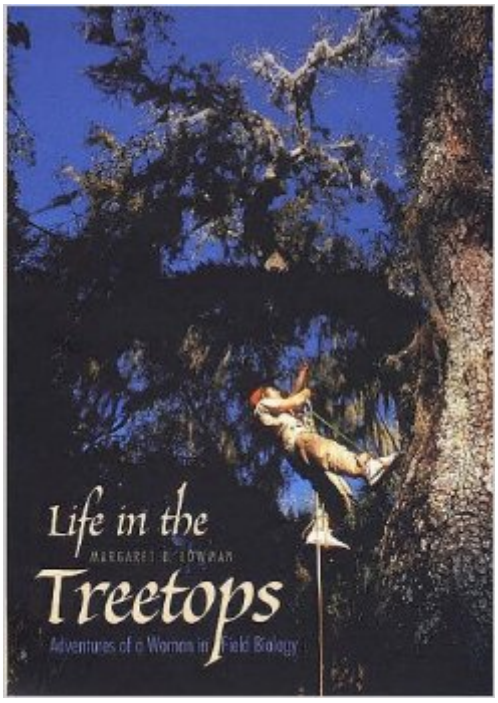
Life In The Treetops: Adventures Of A Woman In Field Biology



Synopsis

A description of the mysteries of the treetops - their inhabitants, flowers and fruits, growth and mortality, and patterns of diversity. Margaret Lowman discusses different canopy access techniques. She also portrays the life of a field biologist from a woman’s perspective.

Book Information

Hardcover: 219 pages

Publisher: Yale University Press; 1st edition (June 10, 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0300078188

ISBN-13: 978-0300078183

Product Dimensions: 8.6 x 5.7 x 0.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.4 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (8 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #733,601 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #15 inÂ Books > Science & Math > Nature & Ecology > Ecosystems > Tropical #1367 inÂ Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Professionals & Academics > Scientists #5807 inÂ Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Biology

Customer Reviews

That’s what I intend to tell Margaret Lowman if she phones me wanting to know if I’d like to go on a field trip with her. This amazing woman botanist hauls herself up by rope or other devices into the 150-foot high canopies of forest trees to study herbivory (process by which animals consume plant leaves). She spends weeks in tropical forests in Cameroon, Peru, Belize, Australia, and Panama patiently counting leaves, and insect damage to them. She works in 100-degree humid heat, covered with mud, bitten by botflies, and chewed on by chiggers. How does she describe these arduous adventures? Well, try words like exciting and exhilarating. All this should come as quite a shock to folks who imagine botanists work in nice little greenhouses developing a new breed of chartreuse rose. It is indeed amazing and difficult work, and we are fortunate to have people eager to do it.Normally I don’t care for little biographies of this type because they are usually heavy on the personal life, and light on the science. Life In The Treetops presents a pleasant blend of the two. After receiving her Ph.D. in Sydney the author married a farmer and lived in the Australian outback. Women aren’t expected to have careers there, and her story of that part of her life is fascinating.You will also learn interesting informational morsels from the world of botany. Fig trees start life as an

epiphyte, their seeds germinating high in the crown of a tree. They then send tendrils down the tree, and these become roots when they touch the ground. The tree essentially grows backwards. Touch a certain Australian tree, and it stings you with venom equal to a bee sting. Some ants bring a variety of seeds to the top of the tree, and let them germinate there to form an ant garden. Ants farming? Some trees in the dark forest grow to a five inch height, and then wait for as long as 35 years for a sunny opening to develop in the canopy. Then they shoot up.Typical of most science books I read these days, this volume ends on a sad note regarding humans and the environment. Ms. Lowman wants more studies done as quickly as possible. Why? She's afraid the forests will soon be gone. An excellent book.

Dr. Lowman traces her origins from the Australian outback, raising two boys, to the pursuit of a scientific career as a world-renowned biologist specializing in the plants and insects of the rain-forest canopy. A highly personalized recounting of the travails and joys of being a female scientist and mother. A can't put-down book

Margaret Lowman writes candidly about her life... as though we were the closest of friends. I expected her to write about her research, the difficulties of climbing into the rainforest canopies, and her globe trotting. And she did. She also writes of the professional challenges, cultural clashes, and personal problems she encounters as a woman in field biology, and that makes this book something quite special.ON THE PERSONAL SIDE: Lowman married an Australian, had two children and lived in the outback, while conducting research on the Australian rain forests. On the personal side, she was expected to be a housewife, and mother. Her new Australian husband, and in-laws, did not understand her inner drive to spend time in her work. While clearly her new family did not support her in her work, Lowman persisted and achieved. She also made a decision to accept a teaching position at Williams College back in the US. She packed up the boys, and headed for home. She exchanged her marriage, and the boy's father, for a surprisingly supportive scientific community and her own supportive parents. Lowman tells of her personal life with candor, but without bitterness. While no one could accuse her of having an ordinary life, Lowman's book is also an every woman's story in that she chronicles the kind of day-to-day struggle of professional/career women faced (particularly in the 1970's and 1980's) in balancing career and family.ON THE PROFESSIONAL SIDE: To help understand the interdependence of the rainforests Lowman mostly studies the small things... leaves, and the insects that eat them. It sounds easier than it is. Most of the leaves to be studied are high up in the canopy of the rain forests. Early in her career, she gains access using

ropes and harnesses, and even a cherry picker when she was pregnant; later she has the luxury of using a construction crane, a dirigible, and even a walkway. Lowman loves the forests, and her work. (Her book contains an illustration of her favorite tree, ficus watkinsiana.)Lowman ends the book telling us that it takes about the "same amount of energy to complain as it does to explain-but the results are incredibly different." Her book explains a great deal. I highly recommend it.

I enjoyed this, but it wasn't quite what I'd expected. It was occasionalty dense with scientific specifics. I'm sure that true scientists would love it, but personally I would have been more interested in additional biographical detail. Still, Lowman's career, and her life, are a fantastic accomplishment. It's fascinating to think about how much things have changed in a short time. I'm going to recommend it to women scientist friends of mine, but possibly not to armchair naturalists.

In one small book Dr. Lowman combines serious science, thoughtful reflections on expectations of self, family and scientific peers and fascinating descriptions of life in a threatened ecsystem. Best of all, she writes clearly and with great insight and wit.

Margaret Lowman's story, Life in the Treetops, is an inspiration for young women considering a life in science. She tells how she balanced a career as a field biologist, studying the forest canopy, with being a wife and mother, and eventually a single parent. Her stories of her experiences as a researcher and tree climber in such exotic locals as the Australian outback, Cameroon, Belize and Panama are intermingled with her observations about the inhabitants of these locals, the people she worked with and her sons. Her perseverance in a field dominated by men has given her an interesting perspective about science and life in general.

SAT Biology E/M) Kaplan GRE Subject Test: Biology (Kaplan GRE Biology) 5th edition The Biology of Coral Reefs (Biology of Habitats Series) The Biology of Deserts (Biology of Habitats Series) The Biology of Freshwater Wetlands (Biology of Habitats) Biology and Ecology of Earthworms (Biology & Ecology of Earthworms) McGraw-Hill's SAT Subject Test Biology E/M, 3rd Edition (McGraw-Hill's SAT Biology E/M) Kaplan GRE Exam Subject Test: Biology 2009-2010 Edition (Kaplan Gre Biology) Sterling DAT Biology Practice Questions: High Yield DAT Biology Questions Sterling CLEP Biology Practice Questions: High Yield CLEP Biology Questions Principles of Bone Biology, Third Edition (Bilezikian, Principles of Bone Biology 2 Vol Set)