

Science & Nature

Garbage! Water! Or Why I Love Non-fiction



GARBOLGY
The Dirty Little Secret About Trash



I read a lot of narrative non-fiction - historical, microhistory, natural sciences, travel, and environmental. I read these to be better informed, but also for pleasure so my ultimate test for a narrative non-fiction book is whether it would have made a better magazine article. I hate finishing something that I think was interesting, but could have been boiled down into a 20 page magazine article with the same impact. I've recently read two non-fiction books passed the magazine article test and then some.

The Big Thirst: The Marvels, Mysteries & Madness Shaping the New Era of Water by Charles Fishman isn't about how to make changes in your lifestyle with regards to water conservation. It isn't a how-to book for urban or rural planners. It is a book that will challenge what you think you know about water from the big picture including where it comes from and what do we really mean by "clean". This book will also identify our emotional connection with water and will put those assumptions to the test. Near the end of the book, an economist presents a model for future water use that makes sense for both dry places like Las Vegas and Australia should also be considered for wetter places like Atlanta and even Bloomington. There are pages and pages of research, calculations and notes at the end, but the book was captivating, accessible and provides much food for thought. [Read more](#)

Posted by sbowman on May 16, 2013

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Animals in Winter: Preschool Science and Math



[view in catalog](#)

As any parent knows, young children are curious about the world. At the library, we explore a range of topics during Preschool Science and Math. When the weather turns cold, I turn to one of my favorite themes for preschool science: Animals in Winter. Here are some of the activities we did in December!

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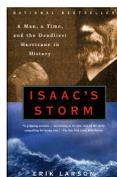
Posted by Christina J. on December 11, 2012

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Hurricane Books



I hope everyone on the east coast is staying safe after the destruction of

Hurricane/Tropical Storm Sandy. Today's storms are met with an overload of information: pictures on social media, non-stop news coverage, live reporting and high tech computer models of the storm's projected path. But if you are in the mood for a more in-depth read about storms, check out a few of these titles.

The 1900 Galveston Hurricane was one of the deadliest on record. Over 6,000 people died in this massive storm, which was complicated by the lack of technology and a complete understanding of weather patterns. Erik Larsson is an excellent non-fiction author and in *Isaac's Storm* he tells the detailed story of the storm, but also of the meteorologist, Isaac Cline who failed to make the best use of the information he saw. The historical details of weather prediction combined with the suspense of the building storm make for an excellent read. [Read more](#)

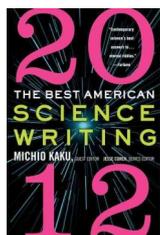
Posted by sbowman on October 30, 2012

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The Best American Science Writing, 2012



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Science has always appealed to me, but it's hard to carve out enough time to keep abreast of all the new science books; that's one reason I really enjoy the *Best American Science Writing* series. It's always fun to discover trends and reconnect with intriguing topics in the field. One good aspect of contemporary science writing is that the authors really write well and can summarize complex subjects in easily understandable language. So what's on science writing's 2012 burner? Medicine, for one. The first four essays explore medical themes, among them: new heart vessels for babies born with weak hearts, and immune systems trained to kill cancer cells. As Denise Grady's article about the latter reveals, after an experimental treatment one man suffering from leukemia lost over two pounds of cancer cells. And a year later is cancer was in total remission.

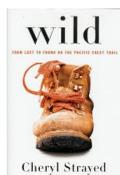
My favorite essay in this collection is Evan Ratliff's "Taming the Wild." It's about a Russian research team that has been breeding foxes for over fifty years. Their foxes are now so tame that not only are they adopted for pets, but they share many puppylike traits such spotted coats, wagging tails, floppy ears and curly tails. A contrasting group of foxes has been bred for aggression and, believe me, you'd want to stay clear of their cages. [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on October 1, 2012

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Wild & Other Hiking Related Books



The [Pacific Crest Trail](#) is a 2,663 mile long trail reaching from the Canadian border in

northern border in Washington, through Oregon, to the Mexico border in southern California. Hiking this trail can take 4-6 months and it purposefully avoids civilization. The Cascade and Sierra Nevada mountains make for both difficult hiking and beautiful unspoiled scenery.

After a trying few years after the death of her mother, author Cheryl Strayed started her PCT trail

hike despite her outdoor inexperience. Her book, *Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail* chronicling her hike came out this past spring and was well reviewed. I promptly put this book on my to-read list as doing a long hike lingers at the bottom of my life to-do list.

Looks like I will have to wait to read this memoir a little bit longer as this past week Oprah selected *Wild* as the first title of her new Oprah Book Club 2.0. As of this morning there were quite a few holds on this book, but I'm thinking the wait just might be worth it. [Read more](#)

Posted by sbowman on June 4, 2012

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An Empire of Ice: Scott, Shackleton, and the Heroic Age of Antarctic Science



While most books about the Arctic or Antarctic focus on just one thing--the indomitable quest to reach one of the poles--this book has a much broader canvas--it covers the equally arduous work of making new scientific discoveries during the age of great polar exploration.

This broader canvas allows the reader to learn about biological, geological, and meteorological phenomena but also about the cost of empire. England sponsored many of these expeditions while this country held political dominion over one quarter of the world. And as the twentieth century dawned, political power was changing rapidly. Britain had lost face in the Boer Wars in Africa and needed heroism and success to bolster its image abroad and its people's faith in the government and military as Germany, France, and the United States were becoming arch competitors.

But the book is mostly about science and adventure under the most brutal conditions. At one point Scott and Shackleton dock near an ice floe and decide it's time to use a hot-air balloon to get a better view of the landscape ahead. In this totally unpeopled land, Scott rides up into the air and views the vast white expanse. For most of us, such a view would provoke sheer terror. And Scott himself was a little nervous in the little bamboo basket. I kept thinking, what if he falls out.

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Posted by Dory L. on November 15, 2011

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