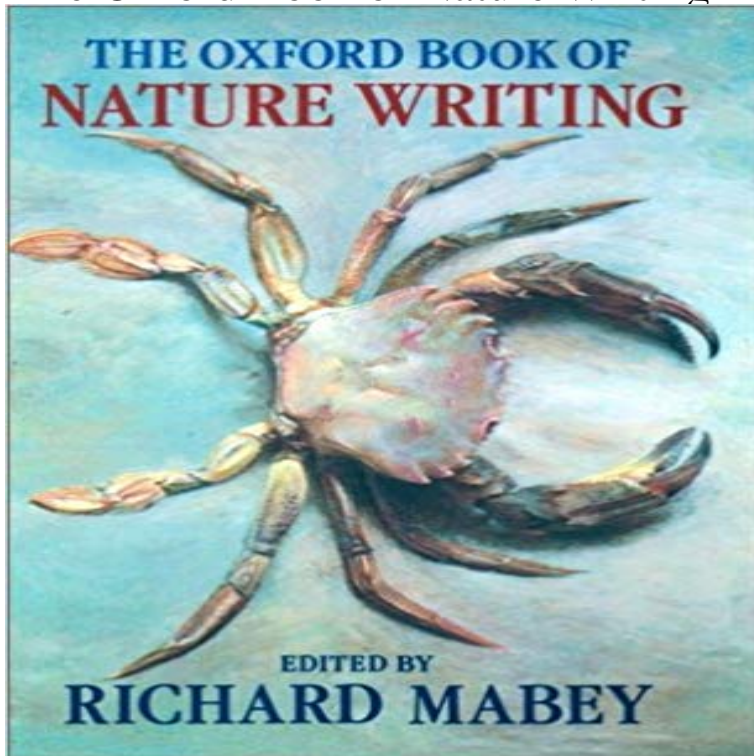


The Oxford Book of Nature Writing



The Great Central Plain of California, during the months of March, April, and May, was one smooth, continuous bed of honey-bloom, so marvelously rich that, in walking from one end of it to the other, a distance of more than 400 miles, your foot would press about a hundred flowers at every step.... Sauntering in any direction, hundreds of these happy sun-plants brushed against my feet and closed over them as if I were wading in liquid gold. The air was sweet with fragrance, and larks sang their blessed songs, rising on the wing as I advanced, then sinking out of sight in the polleny sod, while myriads of wild bees stirred the lower air with their monotonous hum--monotonous, yet forever fresh and sweet as every-day sunshine. So wrote John Muir exactly one hundred years ago, in a passage that conveys not only the natural beauty of California, but also Muir's great love of the outdoors. In *The Oxford Book of Nature Writing*, John Mabey has brought together a sampler of some of the greatest writings on nature ever penned, in pieces that capture our endless fascination with the natural world. There are passages from ancient writers such as Aesop and Aristotle and Pliny, from the medieval manuscripts of Albertus Magnus, and from Anton van Leeuwenhoek's descriptions of microscopic animals. Mabey provides excerpts from the prose of the great Romantic writers, including Dorothy and William Wordsworth, Samuel Coleridge and William Hazlett, from the journals of Henry David Thoreau and from Jean-Jacques Rousseau's letters on botany, and from the naturalist writings of Charles Darwin, George Audubon, and Alexander von Humboldt. Perhaps most impressive is the gallery of contemporary nature writers represented here--a veritable who's who that includes excerpts from Barry Lopez's *Arctic Dreams*, Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*, Loren Eiseley's *The Immense Journey*, Lewis Thomass's *The Lives of a*

Cell, Bill McKibbens The End of Nature, and Annie Dillard's Pilgrim at Tinker Creek. Mabey includes as well the work of scientists such as Nobel Laureate Niko Tinbergen, Jane Goodall, and Edward O. Wilson, plus pieces from such noted authors as Peter Matthiessen, E.B. White, George Orwell, and Primo Levi. Here then are two thousand years of great nature writing. Ranging from the fabulous imaginings of medieval bestiaries, to accounts of far-flung expeditions to the corners of the globe, to contemporary science writings that combine beautiful description, scientific accuracy, and ecological concern, this book will delight everyone who loves nature and the great outdoors as well as all lovers of fine writing.

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