

Children's Books Recommended by State Naturalists

When asked to name their favorite children's book, the naturalists were not able to select just one. A great number of children's nature books line their shelves. Many are wonderfully written, others beautifully illustrated -- some are both. Working in the natural resources field, many naturalists are delighted to see the increased number of nature-oriented books available for teachers, parents and children. Some authors, however, have been somewhat liberal with the facts. Their books may be filled with wonderful illustrations and storylines, but their facts are not correct. Naturalists are experts in their field, so, just like any other educator, they demand accuracy. Here are some wonderfully illustrated, written, and accurate children's books.

Owl Moon by Jane Yolen

Ages 2–6

Late one winter night a little girl and her father go owling. The trees stand still as statues and the world is silent as a dream. Wordlessly the two companions walk along, for when you go owling you don't need words. You don't need anything but hope.

Chipmunk Song, Joanna Cole

Ages 4-8

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be... a...Chipmunk? This beautiful book looks at being a chipmunk from the eyes of a 4-year-old girl. From the warmth of a cozy den to the harsh realities of weasels and hawks, this book contains full color illustrations that inspire the imagination. This book encourages children to live in harmony with their surroundings.

In the Woods: Who's Been Here? – By Lindsay Barrett George

Ages 4 and up

Siblings William and Cammy set off on an autumnal walk through the woods near their house. Although they don't see any wildlife on their trek, they do observe traces of creatures' activities-- including a northern oriole's nest, the remains of a red squirrel's meal, a monarch butterfly's cocoon, and a mud dauber's home. Succinct text explains the evidence the children note, ending with the question "Who's been here?" The following double-page spread provides the answer; detailed notes on the habits of these animals are appended. Two of the examples involve predator-prey relationships that may upset very young listeners, but for most children this will be an excellent introduction to classroom nature units and the perfect prelude to a walk in the woods.

Brother Wolf by Harriet Peck Taylor

ages 4–8,

One day Wolf calls out to the birds—woodpecker, blue jay, cardinal, oriole, hummingbird, goldfinch, owl and wood duck—who fly to help him recover from Raccoon's trick. Then Wolf proceeds to grant the birds' request, that they be painted in pretty colors of the wildflowers. In the end they are as exquisite as we know them to be—and so is the Raccoon!—in this thoroughly delightful story from the Seneca.

The Lorax by Dr. Seuss.

All ages,

Dr. Seuss is perhaps the most popular and best-loved children's book author of all time. Most of us have grown up with his unique characters and stories indelibly imprinted on our minds. *The Lorax* is his stunning and deeply-felt cautionary tale for youngsters that teaches the value and importance of doing our best to preserve and protect our environment.

The Gift of the Tree by Alvin Tresselt

ages 5 and up,

The old oak tree had stood tall and proud for over a hundred years, but even as it grew, life gnawed at its heart. Termites tunneled inside it. Woodpeckers peppered it with holes. And one by one, its great branches crashed to the ground. But as the tree slowly returned to the earth, new life took over—chipmunks, raccoons, and even young trees—all nourished by the gift of the tree.

What's Under the Log? By Anne Hunter

ages 4–8 ISBN 0-395-75496-8

What are the things that scurry away when you turn over a log? With beautifully detailed illustrations, Anne Hunter shows the creatures a child might find there—a sowbug, a salamander, a millipede. Each illustration is accompanied by simple yet detailed text explaining the nature and habits of the animals that find shelter under a log.

Once There Was a Tree by Natalia Romanova

ages 5 and up ISBN 0-14-054677

An old tree is split by lightning and then felled by a woodsman so all that remains is a stump. However, the old tree is not really dead, for beetles, ants, birds, a bear and even a man find ways to use the stump as the seasons change. All of them believe the stump belongs to them and them alone. But the stump is part of the earth, and the earth belongs to all.

The Big Tree by Bruce Hiscock

ages 6–10 ISBN 1-56397-810-5

In 1775, a small seed sprouted in a dark forest. Now that sprout is an extraordinary sugar maple tree. Time and people have changed over the past two hundred years, but the tree goes on, silently providing shade and shelter, a living link with the past. Intertwining botany and history, Not only is the story of the tree and its growth told, but also the lives of the people and animals who have lived near this ancient maple.

She's Wearing a Dead Bird on Her Head by Kathryn Lasky

ages 5–9

Playful illustrations bring to life the story of two determined ladies who helped form one of America's oldest preservation groups, the Massachusetts Audubon Society.

Animal Tracks by Arthur Dorros

Ages 4-8

A question is posed on each double-page spread, and readers are encouraged to guess the tracks of the next animal highlighted. Though the text presents accurate and interesting tidbits, the

illustrations sometimes show distortion in size. A small gallery of life-size tracks and directions for making plaster molds enhance the book's usefulness.

Chipmunk at Hollow Tree Lane by Victoria Sherrow

Ages 4-8

Detailed drawings in colored pencil are used effectively to depict how Chipmunk, a resident of Hollow Tree Lane, prepares for winter by collecting and storing autumn foods in her burrow. Brief, factual information, a short glossary, and the identification of plants contained in the illustrations conclude the interesting look at the eastern chipmunk and its habitat. Smithsonian's Backyard Series