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Synopsis

Science/Nature/Environment Finalist, Next Generation Indie Book Awards
The acorn woodpeckers who call “Waka! Waka!” throughout California’s oak woodlands unite in marriages of up to ten birds and raise their young cooperatively. California ground squirrels roll in rattlesnake skins to hide their scent from hungry snakes. Manzanita’s sensuous red skin peels away in time for summer solstice, allowing trunks and branches to produce extra sugars to fuel growth. Weaving up-to-the-minute scientific findings, personal observations, and flashes of humor into twenty-two masterful chapters, author and naturalist Kate Marianchild explores the intimate lives and interconnections of plants, animals, lichens, and fungi common to California’s oak woodlands from woodrats, newts, and California quail to mistletoe, lace lichen, and California buckeye. Suffused with wonder and illustrated with lavish watercolors, this award-winning book is on its way to becoming a classic of California nature writing. Open it and you will be amazed to discover a fascinating world that “rustles, hums, and sings with the sounds of wild things.”

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“In this sublime ode to California’s most ubiquitous plant community, Kate Marianchild fills the oak woodlands with life, enabling us to peer under fallen leaves, gaze inside layers of bark, and look deeply at animals that scurry on the branches, burrow under the roots, and rest in the shade of trees and shrubs. *Secrets of the Oak Woodlands* introduces you to the magical community of the oak and its neighbors like the coyote, western fence lizard, and California quail and once you’ve read this book, you’ll forever see the oak woodland as the catalyst for a marvelous array of life. --Beth Pratt,

California director, National Wildlife Federation”I love this book. It reads like a walk in the woods with the best naturalists. The clear layout helps me scan for the information that I am looking for, or browse and learn something new. The natural history stories in this book are detailed and rich, sharing discoveries from the latest research and field observations. You cannot help falling more deeply in love with oak woodlands and feeling inspired to care for them.” --John Muir Laws, author-illustrator of *The Laws Field Guide to the Sierra Nevada*”Kate Marianchild’s beautiful and celebratory work guides us through an exploration of trees, trunks, and the creatures that make them home. Open this book and join this biologically diverse community. You’ll be glad you did.” --Dan Gluesenkamp, executive director, California Native Plant Society”Marianchild’s enthusiasm is infectious because she grounds it so well in precise observation, skilled prose, and careful research. Each essay is packed with fascinating and marvelously concise assemblages of facts gleaned from scientific studies. The result is both educational and entertaining. Like the best entertainment, it leaves the reader wishing for more.” --Blue Heron”A wide range of nature enthusiasts will enjoy Kate Marianchild’s informative and well-balanced natural history book....Marianchild’s articulate yet easy to understand writing style makes the book suitable for armchair readers to investigative scholars. The science is clear, research up-to-date, and depth satisfying...At the same time she inserts interesting relevant information and builds the readers’ appreciation for intricately rich oak woodlands.” --Fremontia

“A wonderful enrichment for hikers and nature lovers, *Secrets of the Oak Woodlands* is highly recommended.” --The Midwest Book Review

“A unique and captivating book.” --Debbie Diersch, Albatross (Santa Cruz Bird Club’s newsletter)

“[*Secrets of the Oak Woodlands*] is a beautiful masterpiece of fine writing alongside skillful, deep research. I love the way you observe the natural world and bring the reader into generous, loving relationship with plants and animals that might otherwise be overlooked. This book is a classic of California natural history writing.” --David Lukas, author of *Bay Area Birds*

“An Island Called California, by Elna Bakker, was a favorite of my teacher/mentor Al Molina; he spoke of it highly and in the same way that I endorse your book. Bakker’s prose and style are very similar to yours. I’m so pleased that you’ve given me the opportunity to ‘pass the torch’ with such a well-written book. Al’s teachings mean a lot to me and I’m saddened he didn’t get a chance to read your book.”

• I know he would have toted his well worn copy by his side at all times.

--Joe Mueller, Professor of Biology, College of Marin

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A Californian may vacation in Yosemite, Big Sur, or Death Valley, but many of us come home to an oak woodland. Yet, while common, oak woodlands are anything but ordinary. In a book rich in illustration and suffused with wonder, author Kate Marianchild combines extensive research and years of personal experience to explore some of the marvelous plants and animals that the oak woodlands nurture. Acorn woodpeckers unite in marriages of up to ten mates and raise their young cooperatively. Ground squirrels roll in rattlesnake skins to hide their scent from hungry snakes. Manzanita's rust-colored, paper-thin bark peels away in time for the summer solstice, exposing sinuous contours that are cool to the touch even on the hottest day. Conveying up-to-the-minute scientific findings with a storyteller's skill, Marianchild introduces us to a host of remarkable creatures in a world close by, a world that "rustles, hums, and sings with the sounds of wild things."

So many of us live in the California Oak Woodlands and wonder about the natural history that surrounds us. Now finally there is a readable book that addresses this subject. This book is a delight! I have learned so much about the beings that live here - coyotes and acorn woodpeckers and the lizards and even the lovely spidery lichen that is ever-present but I never understood. And the water-colors are lovely, each one a gem. I plan to give this book as presents this year to everyone I know who lives among the oaks. Thank you Kate and Ann! Just wonderful!

This is one of my all-time favorite books. As a naturalist living in California, who loves to study and come to know the different species living around me, I often have to read dry, objectifying texts in order to gain knowledge about plants and animals. In this book, I get to learn about different species exactly the way I want to learn about them. The information is accurate and thorough, but also intimate and personal. We are not just given a list of characteristics and behaviors, but we have an opportunity to understand the gifts and quirks and personalities of each species the author talks about. The author introduces us to each species as if they are her friends... because they are! So we get to read true stories that make those otherwise dry facts into a living picture that is charming and alluring. The paintings are also exquisite. I only wish this author would write about 100 more

species, so I could get to know them all this way.

This is a delightful book! It is at once engaging and highly informative. I have spent my life in the oak woodlands of northern CA and due to Ms. Marionchild's writings I have a newfound appreciation and interest in local ecology. It is rife with interesting facts and is approachable by both children and adults. I have ordered several additional copies to share with friends and can think of many more who would enjoy this read. Recommended without reservation.

A chapter for each plant or animal. Easy to read and set down and read again. A fun way to read about visitors to your yard or local park.

The author provides in depth insights to many aspects of each of the species she reports on but does so often in a humorous way. The result is a serious text that reads more like a novel than a textbook.

This is a great book for anyone who wants to know a little about there environment. It has information that you don't find in other books. I lead tree hikes for 5th graders and use a lot of information from this book. It is enjoyable, easy to read and will "wow" you with some of the facts.

Great book for understanding the complex habitat of the Oak woodlands. Clear, easy to read, often humorous descriptions of the plants and critters that call this habitat home. I keep referring to this text above many others! I love this one.

Haven't read it yet. Very detailed about the micro crocism.

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