

Books recommended for learning more about the natural world...
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There is of course, no one single source that can cover all the intricacies of in nature, but here are a few that offered me insight, and led me to new sources. While many of these are delightful and informative Internet sources, in my opinion, there is nothing like a powerfully written book that carries you into new ways of thinking and seeing the world. I am not a fan of dry stodgy books so I hope that you find these as interesting and delightful as I did.

The *one most valuable thing* you can do to learn more about the thousands of little family (plant and animal) lives that surround us is to simply pay attention. Stop, look, listen. Every season, every day, has its own revelations. Creating a landscape that invites all the 'baby makin' possible will bring these intriguing interactions close to home will enrich your life , plus it might just be the right thing to do as we humans crowd the planet.

All sources are not equal in accurate information, especially on the Internet. While I heartily recommend some of the wildlife and plant based Facebook pages, be forewarned that some information can be wild guesswork, because most pages allow all members to post and offer opinions, but in time, you will begin to recognize there are some true authorities on particular topics. If you frequent the Southeast Naturalists Facebook page for example, you will soon come to know who is the definitive authority on topics as far ranging as reptiles, moths, fungi, wildflowers, birds, dragonflies, animal tracks or fossils. Every state seems to have several naturalist groups and Facebook communities, so seek them out and be amazed, and always fact check using *more than one source*. The following list is a rudimentary and highly partial guide for more info. If a page takes off in extremist directions, look for others. There are many.

Facebook pages I enjoy, though you are likely to find many directed to your home state:

Southeast Naturalists

Mississippi Naturalists

Wildflowers - What's Blooming in Tennessee

Tennessee Birding

Tennessee's Watchable Wildlife

Soil, Plant Pest Center (great mushroom stuff as well as timely tips for disease and pests)

UT Gardens Jackson (where we often post pics of garden critters and their antics)

There are *many many* more, just search using terms such as wildlife, pollinators, conservation, or whatever your interest is, along with the name of your state or region, for example West Tennessee or Cumberland Plateau, or Southeastern, etc.

Science based sources offer reliable information. Of course, I like to promote the many UT publications and **you can start at uthort.com**, though there are many more to be found with a search of UT publications relating to wildlife. I am proud to be co-author of one with Dr. Natalie Bumgarner and Dr. Craig Harper. This particular pub has one section devoted to attracting wildlife and the other describes most effective methods of controlling those that have become pests.

<https://ag.tennessee.edu/fwf/craigharper/Pages/Backyard-Wildlife-Management.aspx>

but there are many to be found in the Wildlife and Fisheries publications as well.

Other trusted science based sources can be found in government agencies, state, such as TWRA and federal, also try usda. the .gov or .tn

www.tnwatchablewildlife.org

https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/newsroom/features/?cid=nrcs143_023553

a favorite of mine for learning frogs and toads by their calls is

<https://leaps.ms/index.html>

Some insect identification websites that are useful places to start.

Bugwood.org

iNaturalist apps

Ask an Entomologist

What's That Bug?

BugGuide.Net.

Bugwood

Insect Identification Forum.

Insect Identification Key.

AntWeb.

Plus a few links to new UT publications:

Easy from seed includes annuals, biennials and perennials.

<https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/D139.pdf>

Recommended perennials for our region

<https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/W874-B.pdf>

A good discussion of designing screen plantings and useful tables to aid in plant selections.

<https://www.uthort.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Screen-Plants-for-TN-Landscapes.pdf>

All those sources are valuable, but I love nothing better than immersion in a moving book. Here are a few that changed the way I see the world.

Sand County Almanac by Aldo Leopold

Pilgrim at Tinker's Creek by Annie Dillard

The Botany of Desire by Michael Pollan, or really anything by Michael Pollan especially the Omnivore's Dilemma

A Country Year by Sue Hubbell and any of her other books

Illumination in the Flatwoods and The Light in High Places by Joe Hutto

Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer

The Invention of Nature by Andrea Wulf

The Voyage of the Beagle by Charles Darwin
A Walk in the Woods by Bill Bryson (hilarious, too)
Krakatoa: The Day the World Exploded Simon Winchester

If you love horses that speak to the relationship between us and the horse, or really any animals::
Dancers in the Grass: essays by horse trainer Maria Tsimmu Martino who also wrote the Wolf, the
Woman, the Wilderness about her lessons learned when returning a wolf pup to its wild origins.

Elizabeth Marshall Thomas is an anthropologist who turned much of her attention to animal
behavior and social structure, which may sound boring, but NO. Her books are delightful, engaging,
and enlightening. I have read several but hope to read them all before my time is done.

For a time, I gave up reading novels because I felt there was so much to learn about the natural
world that I would not “waste time”. Thank goodness I had friends that gave me books that both
moved and entertained while teaching, sometimes natural world information and other times
important life lessons that broadened my thinking. :

Jayber Crow by Wendell Berry
The Signature of All Things by Elizabeth Gilbert
Most any book of Barbara Kingsolver (who also writes non-fiction)

Thanks for caring about the natural world, and thanks for your interest in pursuing more knowledge.
If only I had a few more lifetimes, maybe I could satisfy my curiosity!.

Please send me your recommendations on books that inspired or opened doors or threw light for
you!

Mostly it is about knowing this is a journey and that plant information is always changing, along with
your own philosophies about your goals with your landscape. If you embrace that philosophy, there
is plenty of optimism to balance any disappointments.

Carol