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Mid-Year Books Issue 2012

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Charles Bedford: *The Hunger Games: Is Panem More Like China...or America?*

Mid-Year Books Issue 2012

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Books: Non-Fiction

No Sale

***What Money Can't Buy.* By Michael Sandel. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012. 256 pages.**

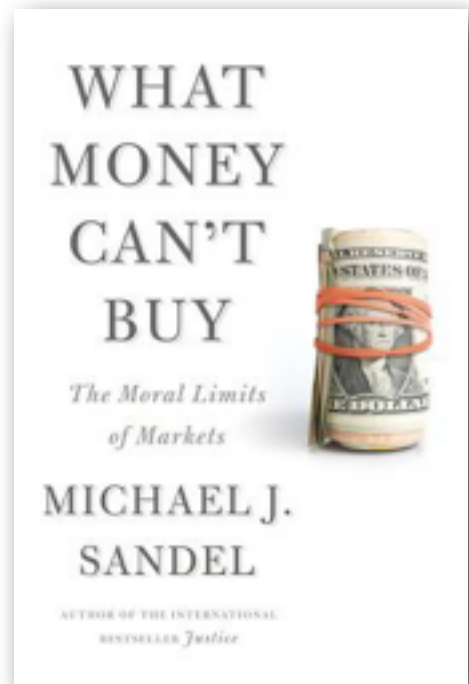
Reviewed by Peter Karevia, chief scientist, The Nature Conservancy

I read this book twice. I almost never do that — but Sandel made me think more than any other author in recent years.

Here is his point — around the world, markets and free enterprise are seen as the cure to everything, and there is a tendency to create markets for things that would have been beyond price decades ago. For example: A prison cell upgrade (\$82/night); the right to emigrate to the United States (\$500,000); the right to shoot an endangered black rhino (\$150,000); the price of an Indian surrogate mother to carry a pregnancy (\$6,250); the right to emit a ton of carbon (\$18 in Europe).

The problem with this trend is that market norms push out other norms. Two examples help make this point. In Switzerland, a small village was surveyed to see whether the citizens would accept a nuclear waste disposal site, and 51% said yes — recognizing that Switzerland gets most of its energy from nuclear power and the waste had to be disposed of somewhere. The survey was repeated with a sweetener — suppose each citizen were compensated with an annual payment? The result: Support for the site went down from 51% to 25%.

Then there is the experiment done with Israeli high school students who were asked to go door-to-door to solicit donations for worthy causes (aid to disabled children, cancer research, etc.). One group of students was given a brief motivational speech and sent on its way. A second group was given the same speech, but also offered a monetary reward based on the amount they collected. The unpaid students collected 55% more than the students given a 1% commission. This made me think about payments for ecosystem services, cap-and-trade and other market based solutions to conservation. After the second reading, I ended up convinced that conservation should rely on financial incentives in some cases — but that in others, “doing the right thing” should be a norm we cultivate. **SC**



Books: Non-Fiction

Smart Money

***But Will the Planet Notice? How Smart Economics Can Save the World.* By Gernot Wagner. Hill and Wang, 2011. 272 pages.**

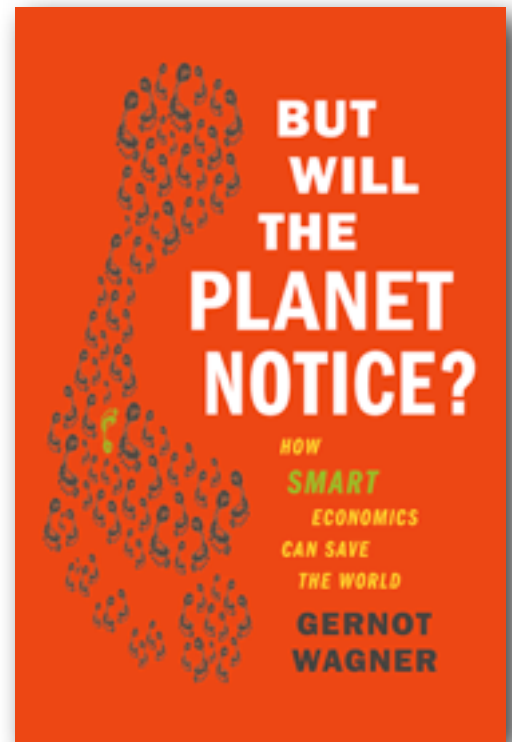
Reviewed by Mark Tercek, president and CEO, The Nature Conservancy

This is a great book by Environmental Defense Fund economist Gernot Wagner. Right off the bat — starting with the book's title — Wagner asks exactly the right and most important question: How do we scale up environmental initiatives so they really move the needle and have a measurable impact on the planet?

Wagner is an economist who more or less believes what you're taught in Econ 101. He spends a good amount of the book helping readers understand externalities, focusing especially on climate change. Of course he respects market power, so he lays out a powerful case for putting a significant price on carbon.

Take taxes, for example. Economists have always agreed: We should tax activities we want to discourage, not encourage. But in the United States today, we tax income. We tax — i.e., discourage — work and jobs. Why not deal with our fiscal deficit challenges instead by taxing carbon? If we did, we'd discourage use of the fossil fuel-based energy that is cooking the planet. And we'd move toward leveling the playing field so that clean forms of energy could better compete.

We did this once. Well, to be precise, OPEC did it to us. I'm old enough to remember the OPEC oil crisis in the 70s. I remember the lines at gas stations in my high school days. By reducing oil supply, OPEC sharply raised gas prices. It was as if OPEC imposed a carbon tax. Except in this case, the tax revenue went to OPEC, not us. What happened when the tax — i.e., the price shock — was imposed on U.S. consumers? At first it was quite a shock to the U.S. economy, and growth stalled. But after a very short adjustment period, consumers changed their behavior. Faced with sharply higher gas prices, both business and man-on-the-street consumers quickly focused on energy efficiency and materially reduced their energy consumption. Fuel-efficient cars, for example, became the rage. And economic growth in the U.S. quickly resumed. Once OPEC faded, we could have kept the country on this energy-efficient trajectory through a carbon tax (but



we would have kept the money this time). Instead, we did the politically expedient thing, allowed gas prices to fall, and set up the opportunity for SUVs and Hummers.

We could still address this challenge today — that was the core idea behind a carbon tax or cap and trade. But instead, we (perversely, in my view) subsidize the use of fossil fuels.

Please excuse this rant (essentially mine). But Wagner provides an interesting framework for thinking about issues like this and the role of market forces in guiding environmental actions. He does so in a very clear style, while showing off his great sense of humor and excellent writing. Who says economics needs to be the “dismal science?”

Wagner’s core question is an important one for us at TNC to consider. We sometimes like to champion feel-good initiatives such as “green Christmas trees” to engage members. That’s great, but we shouldn’t fool ourselves that volunteer initiatives like this — however worthy they may be in building consumer engagement on environmental issues — will have a direct game-changing impact. Likewise, at TNC we are great at accomplishing one-off individual conservation projects. But we need to push ourselves very hard to make sure that our one-off projects somehow scale up — perhaps by being replicated or by influencing public policy — so that they happen at a scale at which the planet will really notice. This is the beauty of Wagner’s book. He pushes the reader to think at the scale that really matters. **SC**

Books: Non-Fiction

The Dark Matter of the Cultural Universe

***Limbo: Blue Collar Roots, White Collar Dreams.* By Alfred Lubrano. Wiley, 2005. 248 pages.**

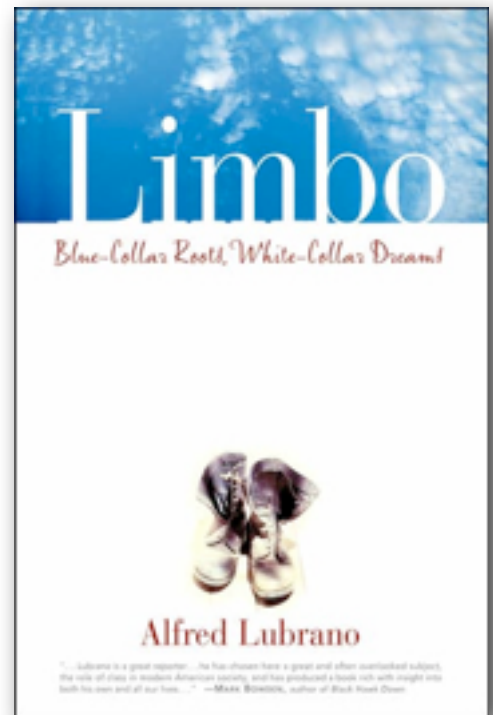
Reviewed by Lynn Lozier, conservation track program manager, The Nature Conservancy in California

This book, by NPR commentator and Philadelphia Inquirer featured writer Alfred Lubrano, is about "straddlers," the first in their families to attend college and matriculate into the middle class. As the title implies, it's about the challenges and contradictions of living in two worlds. It is also both a frustrated and loving portrait of working-class life, prospects and community. Read this book to understand why TNC is viewed as "elitist," and for some insight into why the current rhetoric about "class warfare" so oddly resonates in today's political climate.

Lubrano describes class as the "Dark matter" of the (cultural) universe, unseen but a part of everything, yet the one distinction that is still not talked about in America. Even when he was a student at Columbia, class was never addressed directly. His experiences, and those of other successful straddlers he interviewed, illuminate the huge advantage that "cultural capital" gives members of the dominant class. From which fork to use at the table to the importance of extending yourself to meet new people, the culture that straddlers enter is unknown, and often unknowable. Interestingly, even once adopted, this culture's behaviors and the values they reflect can remain uncomfortable and difficult to embrace, leaving its new adherents caught in the middle — stuck in "limbo."

Lubrano's book brought into focus challenges inherent in my own "mixed" origins: Why I've stuck with tough, dirty work I could have handed off, a deep suspicion of wealth it took years to transcend, and a background sense that networking is cheating and that opportunities should come solely through merit. As TNC works to be more inclusive and relevant, *Limbo* is one place to start to see the world through others' eyes.

SC



Books: Non-Fiction

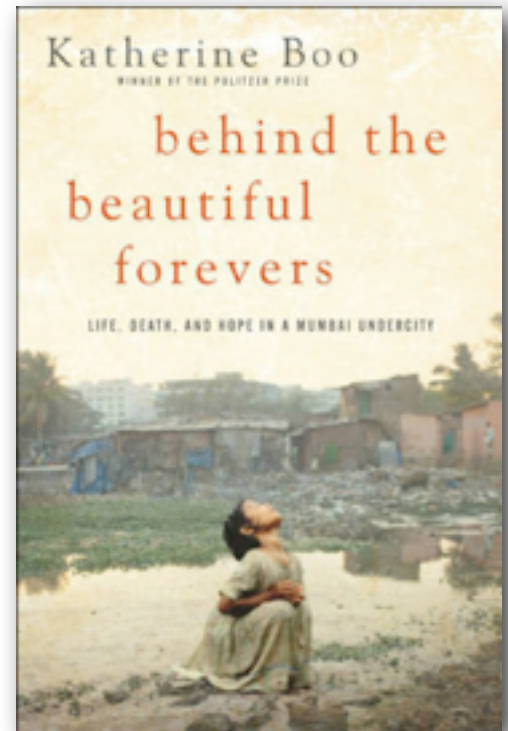
Mumbai Dickens

***Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity.* By Katherine Boo. Random House, 2012. 288 pages.**

Reviewed by Bob Lalasz, director of science communications, The Nature Conservancy

Katherine Boo, a MacArthur Award winner and one of the best reporters on poverty alive, spent four years in a Mumbai slum to gather the raw material for this work, and it was time well spent. *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* will justly win every award a non-fiction book can this year; it plunges you into the life of India's urban underclass with a calm lack of sentimentality that makes you wince and gasp all the more at the grotesque conditions Boo reveals and the culture of cynicism that sustains them.

The slum — called Annawadi — sits on land owned by Mumbai's bustling airport and is in constant danger of being razed, making the story one of double precariousness for Annawadi's thieves, drunks, prostitutes, scrap collectors, teenage hopefuls and hundreds of thousands of other *les misérables*. The spine of *Forevers* involves a fatal dispute between two neighboring families — one getting ahead selling recyclables from the trash of Mumbai's exploding economy, the other seething in resentment at that small success. The book's real protagonists are omnipresent filth; a spectacularly corrupt civil society; and pervasive, almost casual suicide and death. In Annawadi, rats constantly bite children as they sleep — the wounds become infected with worms afterwards — and monsoonal rains cause sculpture-like fungi to sprout between toes. The nearby lake is made of sewage, and its frogs considered a delicacy by the residents. NGOs here are fronts for money laundering, police label murders as TB deaths to clear their books, and children arrested for crimes must bribe doctors to certify they are juveniles. At times, *Forevers* feels like science fiction, at times like Holocaust literature. You can't believe that people this smart and resourceful are caught in lives so stunningly cheap. But, as Boo says in an afterword, our understanding of global urban poverty is overtheorized and underreported. As megacities like Mumbai take off economically, inequality within them is accelerating, too. *Forevers* is mandatory reading for those — including conservationists — who want to make a difference to their entire populations. **SC**



Books: Non-Fiction

She's Got a Gun!

***Girl Hunter: Revolutionizing the Way We Eat, One Hunt at a Time.* By Georgia Pellegrini. Da Capo Lifelong Books, 2011. 256 pages.**

Reviewed by Joe Smith, conservation ecologist, The Nature Conservancy in New Jersey.

Georgia Pellegrini's *Girl Hunter*, an account of her discovery of hunting and eating what she kills, does an outstanding job of reaching a new audience for conservation. The author is a woman in her 20s who lives in New York City, and she is writing for people like herself — many of whom have probably never considered going hunting before.

In this hybrid travelogue and cookbook, she describes a long list of hunts for dove, squirrel, boar, elk, woodcock, duck, turkey — even coot — which were conducted under the careful attention of guides at high-end hunting lodges throughout the United States and in England.

She celebrates the hunting lifestyle: rich dinners with fine wine and good whiskey, classic sporting apparel, and the jaunty look of a side-by-side shotgun over the shoulder. Her stated message is that we should be more in touch with the food we eat and that hunting is part of understanding where our food comes from.

Throughout her book and [blog](#), the author presents the sporting life as an aspirational pursuit: living the good life, looking fabulous while doing it, and being proud that you know how to kill, skin, and enjoy the taste of a squirrel.

Pellegrini makes the outdoor life glamorous. Although *Girl Hunter* rarely touches upon conservation themes, her writing helps to make the field and forest trendy among a new audience of urban, adventurous eaters — and this is very good for conservation. **SC**



Books: Non-Fiction Hybrid Vehicle

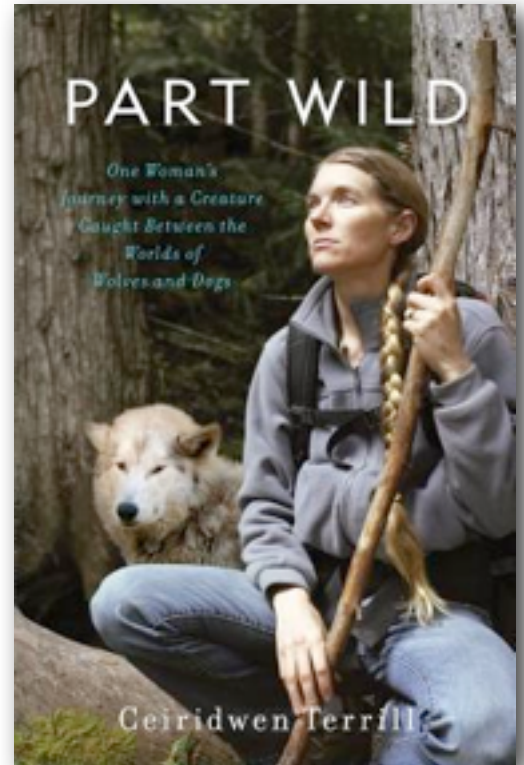
***Part Wild: One Woman's Journey with a Creature Caught Between the Worlds of Wolves and Dogs.* By Ceiridwen Terrill. Scribner, 2011. 288 pages.**

Reviewed by Jen Newlin, creative manager, The Nature Conservancy

In elementary school, there was one book I checked out from the school library, again and again. It was a hardback about a raccoon taken in as a family pet. Photos show a raccoon eating at the dinner table. Curled up in a child's bed.

As a kid I spied them, the raccoons, traipsing our backyard fence. Carefully walking up to the deck to raid the cat food. And I often wondered: wouldn't it be awesome if I just opened that back door? Let them inside?

As the girl who likes all things wild, especially if it involves predators, I recently finished *Part Wild*, a book by local Oregon author Ceiridwen Terrill, who traces the story of her adoption of Inyo, a wolf dog — part husky, part gray wolf. It's this child-like allure of having something wild. And for her? The search for a protector.



Above all, it's a book of honesty. Terrill spills a candid and wrenching narrative of her life with Inyo. Of her life built around Inyo. Of a deep affection. Of early runs and long hikes. Of her living space demolished. The wired and rewired fences. The neighbors who threaten. And she slowly unrolls her own learning of hybrids, wolves and domesticity — ultimately traveling the world to speak with experts.

It's a tale that tugs at big questions and is woven with a sawdust of science. Sure, she's maddening at times — making poor choices. Battling her demons. (Good grief. Find a counselor, leave the boy and get a job already, right?) But when I closed the book, I was a little smarter. A little sad. And a lot more thankful that my seven-year-old self keep that back door shut. **SC**

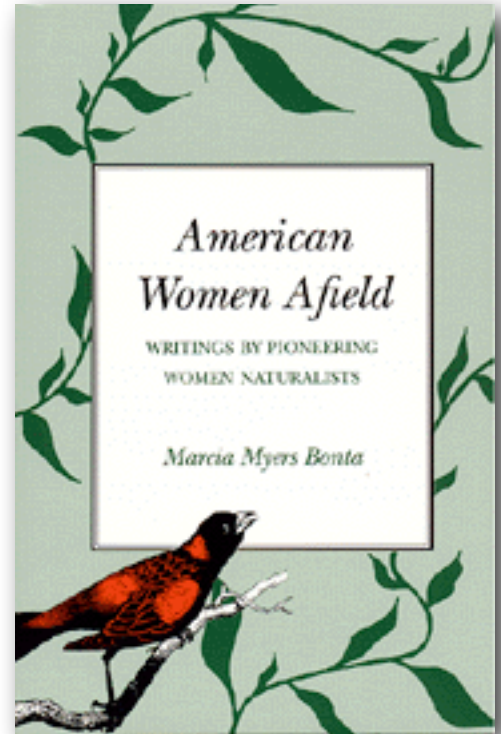
Books: Non-Fiction Through Women's Eyes

***American Women Afield: Writings by Pioneering Women Naturalists.* By Marcia Myers Bonta. Texas A&M University Press, 1995.**

Reviewed by Charlotte Reemts, research and monitoring ecologist, The Nature

Don't let the encyclopedic-sounding title fool you: this book includes earthquakes, marriage proposals (and refusals), carnivorous plants, tool-wielding wasps, and more!

Bonta divided the book into 25 chapters, each devoted to a different female naturalist. The earliest subject, Susan Fenimore Cooper, was born in 1813. Her writing selection is from her book, *Rural Hours*, whose commercial success foreshadowed that of Thoreau's *Walden*, which followed four years later. The rather flowery (to our eyes) description of a summer afternoon walk in the woods turns into a lament about deforestation ("the hewers of wood are an unsparing race") and a description of the aesthetic value of trees (ecosystem services, anyone?).



Some of the other women covered include Mary Treat, who convinced Charles Darwin that insects did not, in fact, enter carnivorous bladderworts willingly; Martha Maxwell, who essentially invented modern taxidermy; Elizabeth Gifford Peckham, who, along with her husband, discovered tool use by wasps (wryly commenting that wasps' idea of pleasant weather — hot and sunny — meant that their observations were gained "by the sweat of our brows"); and Alice Eastwood, a botanist who saved precious type specimens from destruction in the 1906 San Francisco earthquake (Bonta includes her first-hand account of the events).

The final naturalist featuring in this book, Rachel Carson, is probably the best known of all. A selection from *Silent Spring* brings us almost full circle to Susan Cooper's writings, even though the styles are very different. Those differences in writing style were one of the aspects that I most enjoyed about the book. It is also inspiring reading for someone who, like all of these women, simply enjoys being outside and learning the where, what, why and when of how nature works. **SC**

Books: Non-Fiction

Good Catch

***Overfishing: What Everyone Needs to Know.* By Ray Hilborn, with Ulrike Hilborn. Oxford University Press, 2012. 168 pages.**

Reviewed by Peter Karevia, chief scientist, The Nature Conservancy

Put plainly — this is the best book on a “conservation topic” I have read, ever. Why? It is wonderfully unpretentious, authoritative, engagingly written, concise and easy to read. I wish someone would turn this into a series: “Deforestation: What Everyone Needs to Know,” “Green Infrastructure: What Everyone Needs to Know,” “Climate Stress and Extreme Weather: What Everyone Needs to Know,” “Payments for Ecosystem Services...” you get my point. Sadly, there are too few Ray Hilborns in our world. Ray has worked on fisheries for 30+ years. He is analytical and skilled at modeling and understanding the ways statistics and data can be abused. He is fearless and unconcerned with political correctness. He is a terrific writer. But most of all, he is a Zen master of his topic: fisheries. You need depth and wisdom to reduce a complex topic to 130 pages of crystal clear thinking and information. The rest of us experts write long books filled with jargon and non-essential information to cover up for our lack of true insight. Every person who is in any way concerned with or working with fisheries needs to read this book.

I want to offer a few quotes from the book to capture its flavor — so here they are: “But it is good to keep in mind that the standards we have set for maintaining biodiversity in fisheries management by groups advising consumers are much higher than the standards we have set for agriculture.” And: “Fisheries should be a source of great wealth to all coastal countries as they are already in Iceland, Norway and New Zealand. It is truly sad to see so many countries squandering potential wealth of their fisheries through excess capacity and overharvesting.” **SC**



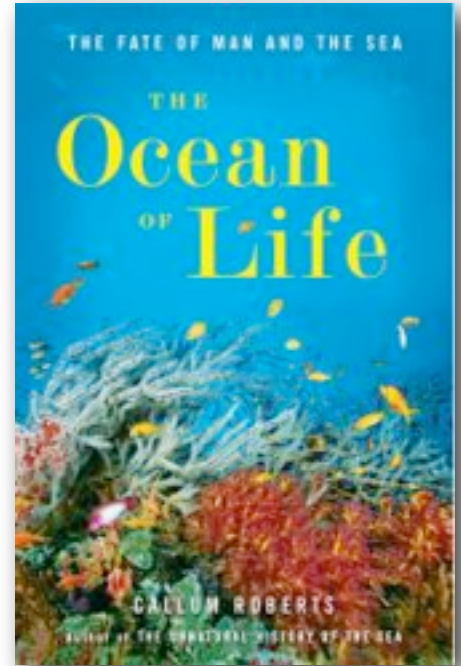
Books: Non-Fiction

The Life Aquatic

***The Ocean of Life: The Fate of Man and the Sea.* By Callum Roberts. Viking, 2012. 416 pages.**

Reviewed by Mark Tercek, president and CEO, The Nature Conservancy

A few years back, I was invited on the Mission Blue trip to the Galapagos led by Sylvia Earle. The group included a number of important people and wise conservationists and marine experts. I wanted to read a good book that would provide a broad overview of everything I should be focused on in connection with marine conservation. I settled on Roberts earlier book *The Unnatural History of the Sea* and I loved it. Roberts is a great writer, and in the most compelling and eloquent way he really does tell the full story — or so I thought — of marine and fishery history in his great book. Starting with an age of marine abundance and finishing with today’s scary and dangerously depleted and stressed situation, Roberts lays out what happened and when/how in a very compelling way. It’s not a happy story of course, but Roberts is a can-do guy and so he concludes in a more practical and cautiously optimistic way. One later chapter is titled “Reinventing Fishery Management” and presents very clearly a number no-nonsense ways forward (including several TNC strategies). And a penultimate chapter is entitled “The Return of Abundance.”



As it happens, the Mission Blue Galapagos trip was a great experience for me. One of the highlights was that Roberts himself joined us. Of course he was an excellent marine advisor to trip participants. He was also a fun traveling companion.

Anyway, as noted, I thought his book told the full story. But not so fast. Roberts’ new book *The Ocean of Life* is even more comprehensive and informative, and raises a number of additional important and difficult challenges for us to focus on. This time around, Roberts provides less history and instead focuses more of his attention on the range of challenges we face today in marine conservation and — very importantly (and in classic TNC style) — what we can do to address them. Again, it’s not really a happy story, but Roberts presents a workable way forward, provided society wises up and starts making better decisions based on sound science and good long-term thinking. We’ll see.

Undoubtedly, over the years ahead, more and more TNC attention will be directed to the marine challenges that Roberts addresses. All TNC staff should be well-informed on these matters. Of course, we have great marine experts on our team to lead us as we move forward. But these issues are so significant, all of us should try to be very well-informed. Roberts' new book is an excellent way to get started. **SC**

Books: Non-Fiction

Fluid Dynamics

***The Big Thirst: The Secret Life and Turbulent Future of Water.* By Charles Fishman. Free Press, 2012. 400 pages**

Reviewed by Bryan Piazza, director, freshwater and marine science, The Nature Conservancy in Louisiana

The Big Thirst is not only a book about water. It is a book about change. By taking the reader on a world tour of water, Fishman shows how humans currently view and use water and how that has to, and will, change in the future.

From American suburbia to the streets of Delhi, Fishman illustrates both the ultimate power of water in economic and personal development and the apathy with which we view this resource — that is, until it become hard to get or disappears. And that's when people begin to see water's value and begin to change. They change by innovating around conservation, as in Las Vegas, where, ironically, water is used much more wisely than almost all of America. They begin to innovate around water pricing and delivery, as in India, where homegrown water delivery innovation in some slums have spurred micro-economies and made standing in line to wait on a truck a thing of the past. When these changes happen, growth happens; but until that time, we face the oncoming dilemma of falling groundwater levels, rivers that no longer flow to the sea, and threatened biodiversity.

As a scientist concerned with and working on water issues, I related strongly with Fishman through his journey. And I think this book will resonate with anyone who is concerned about the human use and biodiversity effects of our current water system and the opportunities that are possible if we change how we think about water. One thing that I particularly liked about *The Big Thirst* is that Fishman does not use these pages as a platform for a “gloom and doom” scenario. Rather, he points out that, unlike many other complicated problems that humans face (e.g., energy, climate change), water issues are local, with local solutions, and that localness should give us real hope. For example, water use in Louisiana does not affect someone in Shanghai, or even Florida for that matter. And because they are local, water problems are very solvable within a short period of time. But to solve them, we must change. **SC**



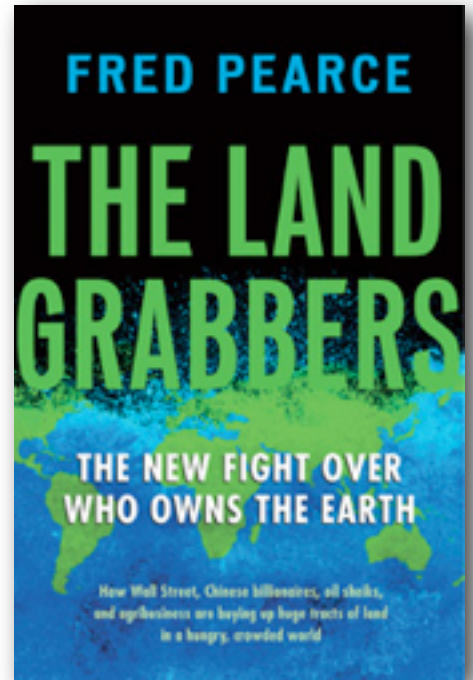
Books: Non-Fiction

Lands' End

***The Land Grabbers: The New Fight Over Who Owns the Earth.* By Fred Pearce. Beacon, 2012. 336 pages.**

Reviewed by Peter Kareiva, chief scientist, The Nature Conservancy

Fred Pearce is the best environmental journalist and science writer in the business. Unlike most conservationists, he is not imprisoned by an ideology or agenda — he just tries to find out what is really going on in the world. *The Land Grabbers* tells the story of nations, companies, private equity groups and NGOs that are buying up massive amounts of land (and sometimes water) — either to make money, feed the world, protect biodiversity, or feed themselves. We have all heard stories of “the Chinese” buying up land around the world, tales that are often told with a hint of cultural bias. But land grabbing is not a Chinese enterprise — it seems to be something everyone is getting into, fueled by reports from the likes of McKinsey consultants who point out that agricultural growth has been double that of the overall growth in Africa, and could easily meet the world’s food demands if all the arable land were used.



Conservationists need to understand this business of land grabbing, and make sure their own strategies and projects do not fail because of the large profits to be had from land acquisition. It may also be the job of conservation to urge the world to “*stop and think about it*” before corporate scale agriculture is wholeheartedly embraced as the best pathway to feeding those next 2 billion. It could be that smaller farmers — NOT corporate agriculture — have the best hope of jointly achieving food security, protecting nature and reducing poverty. This book is a must read for anyone interested in conservation. And there is an admonishment on page 230 we should all be concerned with: “whatever their sustainability rhetoric, very few conservation projects trouble to measure the impacts of their work for either conservation or poverty alleviation.” People are noticing. **SC**

Books: Non-Fiction

Emancipation Proclamation

***Raising Elijah: Protecting Our Children in an Age of Environmental Crisis.* By Sandra Steingraber. Da Capo Press, 2011. 368 pages.**

Reviewed by Darci Palmquist, senior science writer, The Nature Conservancy

True confessions: I didn't want to like this book. With its grave subtitle and the author's equally grave mug shot on the back jacket flap, I could tell it would be doomy-and-gloomy. And yet...my favorite magazine (Orion) deemed it a finalist for its 2012 book award. And yet...I have a two-year-old daughter at home, and her exposure to environmental toxins is ever-present in my mind. And then there's the description of Steingraber as "a poet with a knife." I dove in.

With chapter titles like "Pizza (and Ecosystem Services)" and "The Big Talk (and Systems Theory)," Steingraber blends engaging storytelling with informative science (she's a biologist herself). She tackles big parental concerns — from playgrounds made with arsenic (in the form of pressure-treated wood) to lunch served up with a side of mercury (fish, water) and a sprinkling of BPA (cans, plastic) — through the lens of her own family. Is this book just for parents? Maybe. But I think anyone with an interest in environmental toxins and their impact on people will gain fascinating insight into the historical, political and ecological context of these toxins.

Steingraber is fierce — she likens the environmental crisis to slavery, saying we must emancipate ourselves from enslavement to fossil fuels, and invokes the abolitionist Elijah Lovejoy (who she also names her son after) as inspiration in the fight for change.

She is also funny, witty, smart, spunky and deeply personal. In the end, I couldn't put the book down. (True confession #2: I didn't finish the last chapter. It was due back at the library and, well, having a toddler at home isn't very conducive to reading.) Whether you find her position to be over-the-top or spot-on, there's no denying that Steingraber deserves her reputation as [Rachel Carson's heir](#). **SC**



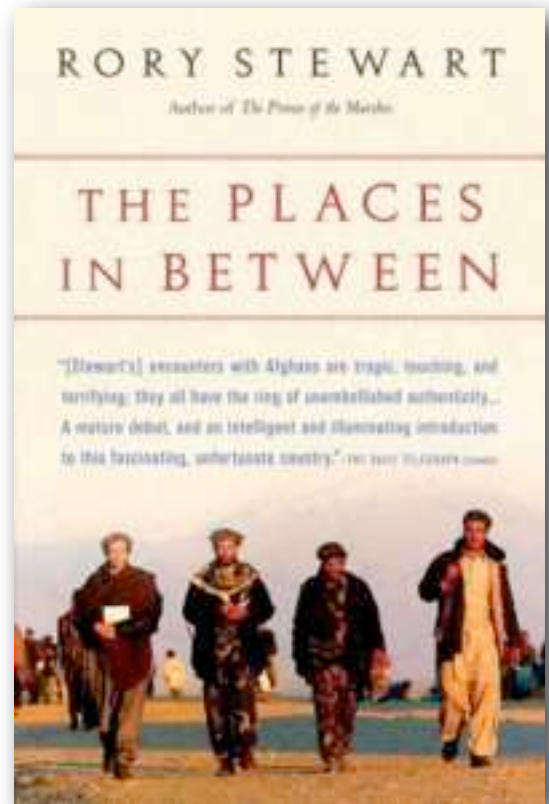
Books: Non-Fiction

Walking Across Afghanistan

The Places in Between. By Rory Stewart. Mariner Books, 2006. 297 pages.

Reviewed by Craig Leisher, senior advisor on poverty and conservation, The Nature Conservancy

If Bruce Chatwin had been truthful, he could have written this book. If Redmond O'Hanlon were a linguist, he could have made this trip. If Paul Theroux were an endurance athlete, he too might have hiked across Afghanistan just after the Taliban fell. But none of these great travel writers has ever written a book like *The Places in Between*, Rory Stewart's chronicle of his west-east walk across of Afghanistan. It is travel writing with honesty and simple truths. When the author gets dysentery, we read about it. When the author encounters the looting of the little-known Turquoise Mountain culture, with its exquisite art, eclectic religious influences and Jewish cemetery in the middle of Afghanistan, he renders the looting both tragic and understandable. When he encounters the deep divides between the largest ethnic groups in Afghanistan and the country's mountains of ignorance, a unified and democratic Afghanistan seems as likely as the Javan rhino being reintroduced to Vietnam. Read this book and the 2010 [New Yorker profile](#) of the author, and perhaps you'll agree that Stewart is destined to be greater than Chatwin, O'Hanlon or Theroux. **SC**



Books: Non-Fiction Not Exactly Mickey

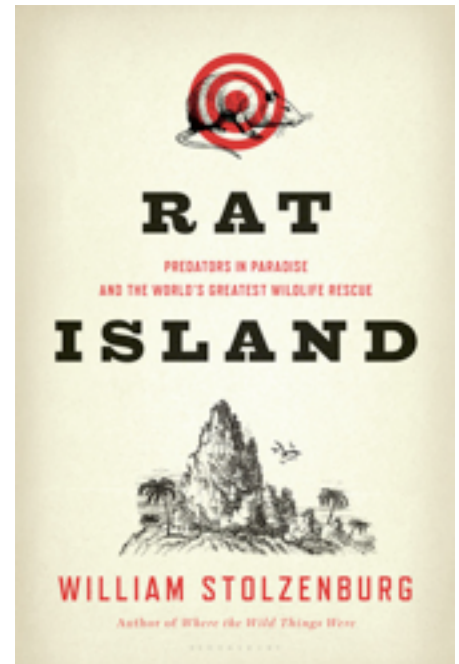
***Rat Island: Predators in Paradise and the World's Greatest Wildlife Rescue.* By William Stolzenburg. Bloomsbury USA, 2011. 288 pages.**

Reviewed by Matt Miller, senior science writer, The Nature Conservancy

Like stranded teenagers cavorting in a B-grade horror movie, island birds come ill prepared to deal with menace. In his latest book, William Stolzenburg opens with the gruesome fates that await naïve birds confronted with a seemingly endless parade of introduced rodents, cats and foxes. Consider Gough Island, off the South African coast: “Gangs of mice were rushing from out of the dark to attack birds three hundred times their size. The mice were chewing holes in the rumps of seventeen-pound albatross chicks as they sat, eating the living birds from the inside out.”

Islands, small and contained, make the dangers of invasives particularly severe. But the small and contained nature of islands also allow conservationists to set things right. Stolzenburg — one of conservation’s most astute chroniclers — tells this as an adventure story, full of characters, failed missions and easy-to-despise villains. Through trial and a lot of error, conservationists now employ the latest research and technology to eradicate the invaders. It’s an often remarkable story of success, of turning biological desert covered in rat turds into an island paradise echoing with the chorus of baby birds.

But even in paradise restored, there can be uncomfortable truths. Conserving birds means many furry mammals must die, often painfully. While rats and foxes make convenient villains, they’re really just following their own evolutionary paths. Stolzenburg briefly mentions the concerns of animal rights activists, but is rooted firmly in the “ends justify the means” camp. He also fails to address the very real possibility that a new generation of rats might recolonize these islands, thereby starting the whole cycle anew. But these are minor quibbles: It’s a well-told, well-paced tale, that rare conservation book that is suited for the beach. Just watch out for what’s nibbling on your toes. **SC**



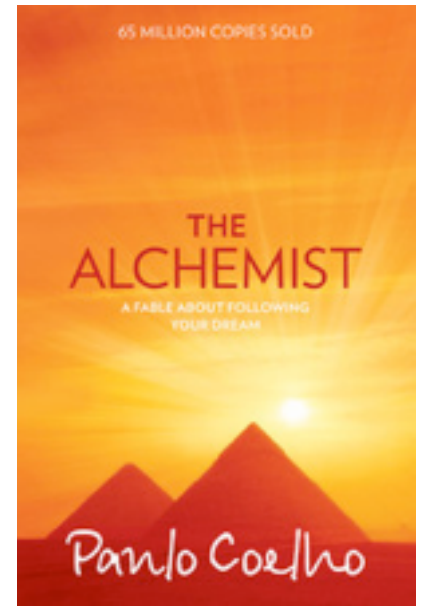
Books: Fiction

Shepherd Boy Makes Good

***The Alchemist: A Fable About Following Your Dream.* By Paulo Coelho. HarperSanFrancisco, 1995. 176 pages.**

Reviewed by Bryan Piazza, director, freshwater and marine science, The Nature Conservancy in Louisiana

If you like fables, you'll love *The Alchemist*. This novel by Paulo Coelho describes the journey of an Andalusian shepherd boy named Santiago from his homeland in Spain across the Egyptian desert as he follows a recurring dream that tells him of buried treasure at the Pyramids. Along the way, he learns that finding this treasure is his "Personal Legend," and, to find it, he must turn this worthless dream into a priceless reality. But that won't be easy, as this transformation requires dedication, perseverance, toughness and honesty, as he learns to listen to his heart, overcome adversity, fight apathy and navigate his omens. Santiago meets and grows to know a number of powerful characters throughout his wonderful journey, and, whether good or bad, each character represents a critical piece of his transformation, especially the Soul of the World.



There is no doubt why this book is an International best seller, now translated into more than languages. Santiago shows us the internal transformation that is possible when we each strive to reach our own Personal Legend. And, by transforming a simple story into a powerful spiritual treasure, Paulo Coelho shows that he truly is an Alchemist. I came away from this book with a renewed inspiration for not only following my dreams and passions, but also for doing my part to help TNC realize its Personal Legend. I think Santiago's story will inspire you, too. **SC**

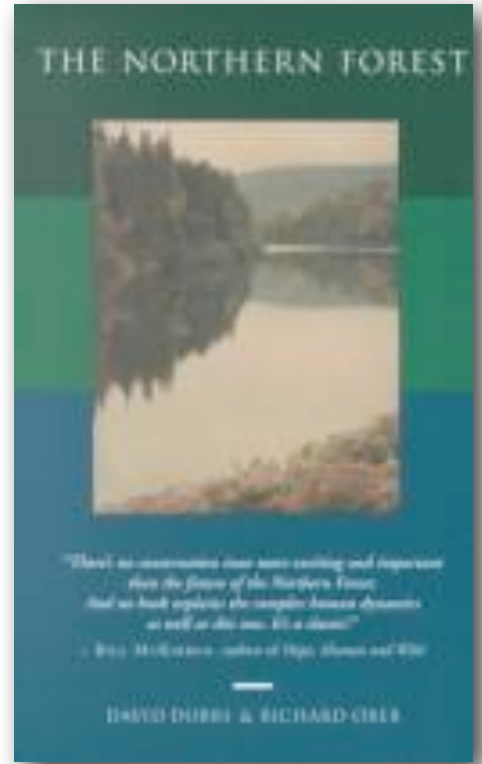
Books: Non-Fiction

Tree Your Future, Be Your Future

***The Northern Forest.* By David Dobbs and Richard Ober. Chelsea Green Publishing, 2008. 384 pages.**

Reviewed by Craig Leisher, senior advisor on poverty and conservation, The Nature Conservancy

The northern forest of New England is the largest tract of undeveloped land east of the Mississippi. The forest is also a crucible for conservation in the United States. These forests were the first to be extensively logged. Timber was harvested for the first 100 years, and then it has been paper and timber for the last 100 years. For generations, a handful of large companies have owned most of the northern forest, and by the 1980s, a half-dozen Fortune 500 companies ran the woods as paper plantations complete with company towns. In the last 20 years, clear-cutting, river pollution and the economic decline of the U.S. paper industry created opportunities for conservation gains. The Conservancy's first mega-deal happened in the north woods of Maine. Conservation easements found fertile ground in the northern forest, and the first government-mandated removal of a hydroelectric dam happened here. *The Northern Forest* shows the inherent complexity of conservation in forests where all but a small fraction of land is private property. There is no happy ending in this book. Yes, there have been dramatic and lasting conservation gains. Yet most of the local people and the local forests are impoverished, and there's nothing to suggest those situations will change anytime soon. **SC**

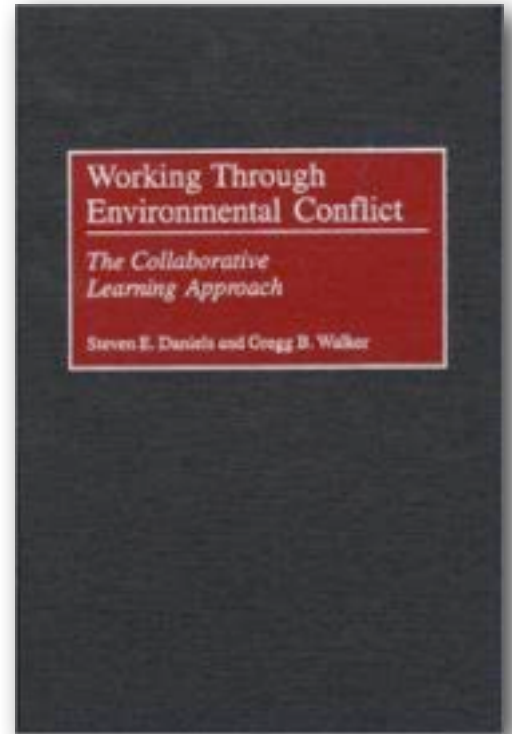


Books: Non-Fiction Come Sit By Me

***Working Through Environmental Conflict: The Collaborative Learning Approach.* By Steven E. Daniels and Gregg B. Walker. Praeger, 2001. 328 pages.**

Reviewed by Randy Swaty, ecologist, LANDFIRE team at The Nature Conservancy

Almost 10 years ago, the late Bruce Boggs recommended that I read *Working Through Environmental Conflict: The Collaborative Learning Approach* by Steven Daniels and Gregg Walker. I think Bruce was ahead of his time even having heard of this book. I picked it up and was immediately impressed with its depth, scientific rigor and potential contribution to the art and science of conservation. This is not a book you pick up at the airport to read on your next flight, but a manual for the work we do. In a way, I am embarrassed at the timing of this review, but in a way it's perfect as conservation increasingly focuses not only on preservation, but in working together to reach innovative solutions to serious problems. We cannot only work on our own preserves. We cannot only work with one type of person, but must work with many types of people. I am a big fan of the "Beer and Coffee Approach" to conservation, but sometimes you need more. You need to collaborate and learn together.



The few of you that actually know me have most certainly heard me use the term "collaborative learning." I have no idea if this has made any sense or has just seemed like a creative pairing of two words. Perhaps it seems like a way for me to be superior. I can only suggest reading the book to get a fuller appreciation of the concept. **SC**

Books: Non-Fiction Search Results

***Search Inside Yourself: The Unexpected Path to Achieving Success, Happiness (And World Peace).* By Chade-Meng Tan. HarperOne, 2012. 288 pages.**

Reviewed by Mark Tercek, president and CEO, The Nature Conservancy

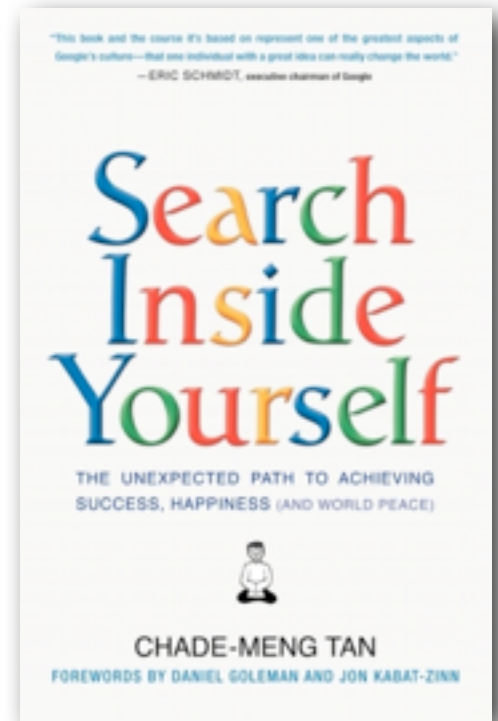
Do you ever find working at a mission-driven NGO like TNC a bit stressful? Do the challenges of collaborating across our many organizational units sometimes test your patience? Do “climate skeptics” occasionally get on your nerves? C’mon, admit it — sometimes our many meetings designed to build consensus give you a headache. Even our passionate volunteer leaders and supporters can wear you down, right?

Don't be too hard on yourself. You're human. We all get stressed out. The important thing is how best to deal with stress. Most of us love our jobs, but need good ways to manage stress. I get overly stressed myself, so am always eager to find ways to better cope. I try it all — running, yoga, family time of course, rock 'n roll, travel — you name it. So I was excited recently to discover this great book written by one of Google's senior engineers, Chade-Meng Tan.

TNC is not the only organization of high achievers whose employees get a bit stressed out. Google is another. Chade-Meng decided to do something about it. After some intense study of meditation, emotional intelligence and related fields, he put together a course for Google employees on how to be happy. The course has been a huge hit at Google, and this book lays out the course for the rest of us.

Spokespeople for meditation and other spiritual practices can be off-putting to some practical types. But Chade-Meng deals with that. He is an engineer who wants to win over Google's other hardboiled engineers. Accordingly, he offers fact-based, no-nonsense advice and examples.

Here's one example: Chade-Meng offers advice for those times when a seemingly small situation causes a disproportionately large emotional response. You know — the kind of event where a third party (like my staff) might think someone like me is making a mountain out of a molehill in my excited, immediate and very emotional response.



Here's what Chade-Meng recommends one should do in such circumstances: Stop. Breathe. Notice. Reflect. Only after steps 1 through 4 — (finally) Respond. Of course, he lays out exactly how to do this in the most thoughtful way. I can't help but think how much better I could have handled tricky situations at work (and at home) if I followed these disciplined steps.

Best of all, Chade-Meng is a cheerful and upbeat author. His Google business card states his title as "The Jolly Good Fellow of Google" and adds "which nobody can deny." His book is fun, encouraging and full of practical steps about how to create useful mental habits that will raise self-mastery and happiness. I have a very long way to go in my own practice of Chade-Meng's steps, but I'm having fun trying and enjoying the effort. I urge my TNC colleagues to read this great book. **SC**

Books: Non-Fiction I Couldn't Help It

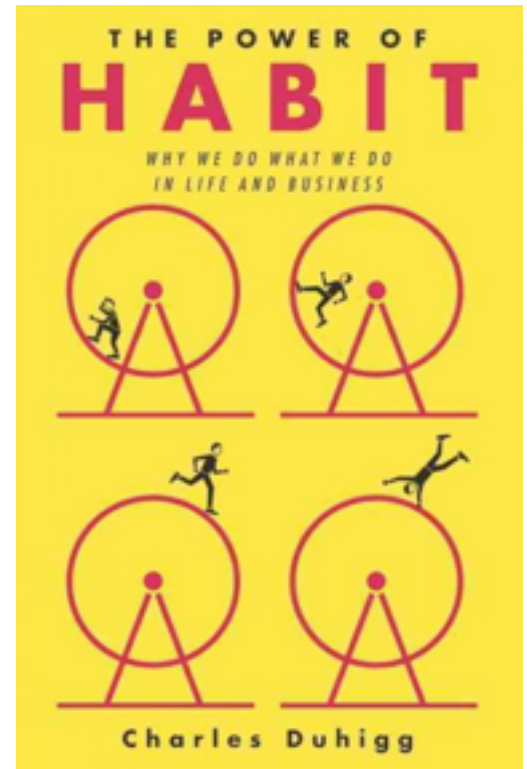
***The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business.* By Charles Duhigg. Random House, 2012. 400 pages.**

Reviewed by Bob Lalasz, director of science communications, The Nature Conservancy

We might be 60% water, but we're also more than 40% habit — and the latter statistic might be just as significant. Without habits, which allow primitive parts of our brain to handle brushing our teeth or driving the same old way to work, we'd have constant nervous breakdowns, overwhelmed by having to make choices about everything. Even more: *New York Times* writer Charles Duhigg argues in his new book *The Power of Habit* that habits drive our behavior as much as willpower, memory or reason — and that anyone who wants to change personal or mass behavior ignores them at their peril.

In *Habit*, Duhigg romps through the latest neuroscience about habits, sprinkling in Gladwellian stories of personal and organizational habits transformed, but also spied and preyed upon. You learn why fast food becomes so quickly addictive (and the one keystone habit to make a diet work); how companies like Target use data patterns to tell when women customers are pregnant and send them coupons and fliers for pregnancy and baby supplies; how Paul O'Neill transformed Alcoa as its CEO from near-bankruptcy to record profits by focusing on worker safety, of all things, which inculcated strong habits of innovation and communication throughout the company. And there's hope for all us gamblers, procrastinators and bad-habit types: While a habit can't be purged, it can be changed to a good one, if we swap in a virtuous response for the unproductive one in the habitual cue-response-reward dynamic. (The success rate of AA is one testament to this.)

So, conservationists: Can we somehow make *nature* a social habit again, an automatic craving in the way it was for tens of millions who hiked and hunted and fished and found solace in the outdoors two generations ago? A tough task in an always-online world, and a lot tougher than the already-difficult appeal to nature's value or lifestyle alteration. But you'll finish *Habit* thinking we have no other choice. **SC**



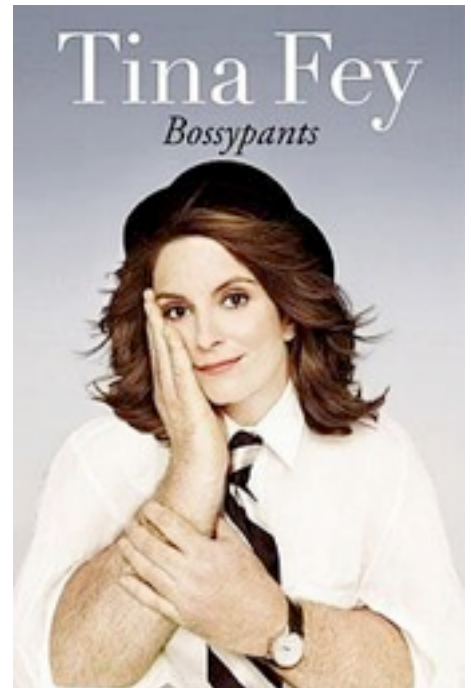
Books: Non-Fiction Middle-Seat Relief

***Bossypants*. By Tina Fey. Reagan Arthur Books/Little, Brown & Company, 2011. 277 pages.**

Reviewed by Peter Karevia, chief scientist, The Nature Conservancy

We have all been there — that middle seat in the back of the plane for a six hour flight and no hope for an upgrade. A few drinks might help. But when those neighborly elbows and girths spill over into your space, desperate measures are needed. Thank God for Tina Fey's bestseller. I bought it when I realized I could not escape 27B and needed to be tranquilized and entertained so I could forget the fact I was squished in every dimension. *Bossypants* is the perfect antidote to a middle seat. It is a cliché — but I really did laugh out loud.

My favorite section is the description of how Tina and all her women friends first noticed that they were becoming women. I read that aloud to my 22-year-old daughter, and she agreed — perfectly executed. It does not paint a pretty picture of us men. You might think this is a book for women. It is not. I loved the book and then passed it on to my daughter and almost felt enlightened until Celina reassured me that I was still a Neanderthal — even if I did like this book. So buy it at your local airport — you will see it on display, I am sure. Do not think of this as just another celebrity memoir or autobiography — think of it as social commentary that is wicked and irreverent and delivered with panache. **SC**



Essay

The Hunger Games: Is Panem More Like China...or America?

By Charles Bedford, regional managing director for Asia, The Nature Conservancy

My wife and I were curious about the phenomenon surrounding the publication and film of *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins. Having read all of the *Harry Potter* series to our now seven-year-old daughter over the last four years at least five times, we were looking for new series that would engage her and us. So we started reading first to see if our daughter could handle the violence (Cedric Diggory and Fred Weasley were pretty bad, but even at age five she recognized the difference between fantasy and reality).

While *The Hunger Games* is a good story and pretty imaginative, the writing isn't good enough to rise into the *Harry Potter* stratosphere. It also is really more in the nature of science fiction than fantasy; the difference being that science fiction paints a possible future, rather than a magical one. That realization sparked a conversation about the two countries we are currently straddling, China and the United States, and which the fictional country of Panem more resembles.

For those of you who have been living under a rock or only speak a language that it hasn't been translated into yet, *The Hunger Games* is a young-adult-fiction trilogy set in a country that is divided into 13 districts and the Capitol, the seat of Panem's totalitarian government. The districts are resource colonies and manufacturing/processing zones to which residents are restricted. The economy of the districts is manipulated to provide subsistence-level income to district residents and to maximize goods and services to the Capitol. This arrangement is enforced by controlling the flow of food, by armed and violent "Peacekeepers," and by surrounding the districts with electrified razor wire. Imagine a slightly nicer version of a Mississippi prison cotton farm in the 1930s or Australia without the social mobility circa 1800s. Additionally, each year each district is forced to render up two teenagers — one boy and one girl — to compete to the death in a huge arena for the pleasure of the viewing public and to remind the districts who is actually in charge. The Games are the sporting and social event of the year for the Capitol, which holds elaborate banquets for the contestants, make them up and parade them around in the latest high fashion. Last person standing is the "Victor," whose reward is to return to her or his district and live in comfort the rest of her or his life.

So you get the picture. Now, the parallels:

Restriction of Movement: China has a residence registration system called *hukou* that doesn't allow people to move freely around the country, restricting people in the countryside where social benefits and education are worse than that available to city dwellers. When people do move anyway, they are turned away at hospitals and schools unless they have money to pay the higher fees for non-residents. This is done partly to

ensure food self-sufficiency and partly for social stability. (What happens when the 700 million farmers show up in Beijing all at once? This is a significant worry!) A recent example of this system was the case of dissident Chen Guangcheng, who was forced to stay (because of his *hukou*) in Shandong province, where the thug friends of the local government have been beating and harassing him and his family for the last four years since he exposed their illegal forced sterilization and abortion schemes. When he came to the U.S. Embassy, he didn't actually want to come to the United States, he just wanted to move to Nanjing to go to law school. The man is Chinese, a patriot, and he just wanted better skills to fix this place. Now it seems he prefers NYU's law school. (If I were him, I'd shoot for Harvard — who can turn a guy like this down?).

The U.S. system is relatively unregulated except for by income level — visit any American suburb and one of the first things you see is a billboard map of the beige development with neighborhoods identified by price of house (“From the \$280's!”) rather than by some other attribute. Assuming greater opportunity in the United States for merit-based advancement, the United States wins regarding freedom of movement for its citizens. For non-citizen visitors to our respective countries, however, it is another story. I've never heard of an American denied for a tourist visa to China, but it happens all the time for Chinese wanting a tourist visa to the United States, especially to young single women. Not sure where the public policy reason for those denials might be found in the immigration code....

Resource colonies: This concept is time-honored and utilized by both China and the United States in both their domestic and international interactions. The United States is the biggest per-capita consumer of, well, everything that can be dug out of the earth, synthesized, manufactured, processed, raised, caught, grown and killed. China has already surpassed us in overall consumption, but the Chinese are feeding, clothing and keeping plastic consumer goods supplied to 450% more people. All these things we use and eat come from somewhere, whether it is the matrix of gas wells that covers the landscapes of the American West; the massive industrial fishing boats that rake the ocean bottom for protein to make “krab”; the rare earth mineral deposits of Inner Mongolia necessary for cell phones and drone planes; palm oil plantations (instead of tropical forests) necessary for our Cheetos, etc. Fortunately some headway has been made on managing the impacts of this extraction in the (non-U.S. and non-Chinese) colonies by a number of UN agencies; the U.S. Congress and EU (FCPA type legislation banning bribery abroad); global lending institutions and NGOs through principles, conditional lending and best-practices examples.

Gini Coefficient: Higher Gini coefficients (GC) signify greater inequality in wealth distribution, with “1” being complete inequality and “0” being complete equality. While GC is an imperfect measure of fairness due to the difficulties of comparing wealthy countries with resource-poor countries (or big with small), the GC of Panem must surely be very high, as the residents of the Capitol have Roman-style banquets with emetics to allow for purging and eating more, while most of the Districts are virtually starving. Interestingly, China and the United States have a statistically identical GC number at the

“In the United States, it is mainly the Democrats that express concern about the growing gap between rich and poor. In China, everyone seems concerned about inequality. In both cases, statements of concern over the last 30 years do not appear to have had any impact on the actual numbers.”

moment (both in the .42 range, depending on the data source). In Panem, there is no expression of concern for inequality, as such expression is suppressed ruthlessly. In the United States, it is mainly the Democrats that express concern about the growing gap between rich and poor. In China, everyone seems concerned about inequality. In both cases, statements of concern over the last 30 years do not appear to have had any impact on the actual numbers. Ironically, however, the GC in China has surpassed the level that a former official called unsustainable and would lead to social instability, so now mention of the GC has been completely removed from the public realm.

Panem et Circenses: Panem is named after the Roman phrase *Panem et Circenses* (bread and circuses) which is used to describe the creation of public approval through diversion, distraction and/or the mere satisfaction of the immediate, shallow requirements of a populace. This is taken to extremes in Panem through the tribute and sacrifice process that distracts the residents of the Capitol and Districts every year (sort of a cross between “Dick Clark’s New Year’s Eve,” “Ultimate Fighting” and “Survivor.” So I guess that analogy reveals at least a little bit of a parallel to America television — though it is hard to discern any government-driven ideology therein. Certainly the Chinese government has been focused on providing bread to its people through opening of markets, protection of farmland for food security (or rather, making it hard for farmers to sell their farmland), public investment in the food industry, infrastructure, etc. And the Chinese have their circuses too: the media, like in Panem, is totally controlled by the state. CCTV’s annual New Year pageant has been highly watched for decades and still sets style and tone for the country. Only about 20 foreign films are allowed to be screened here every year — filtering out anything controversial, political, overly sexual, or, oddly, anything to do with time travel. But remarkably, on the heels of last month’s meetings with Hillary Clinton came the announcement that China would be allowing, of all films, *The Hunger Games* to be shown here. And, of course, Chen Guangcheng has left District 6 (the wheat-growing zone) to study in the Capitol of Capitalism, New York.

So perhaps it all works out well in the end. We all get our bread and circuses.... **SC**

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