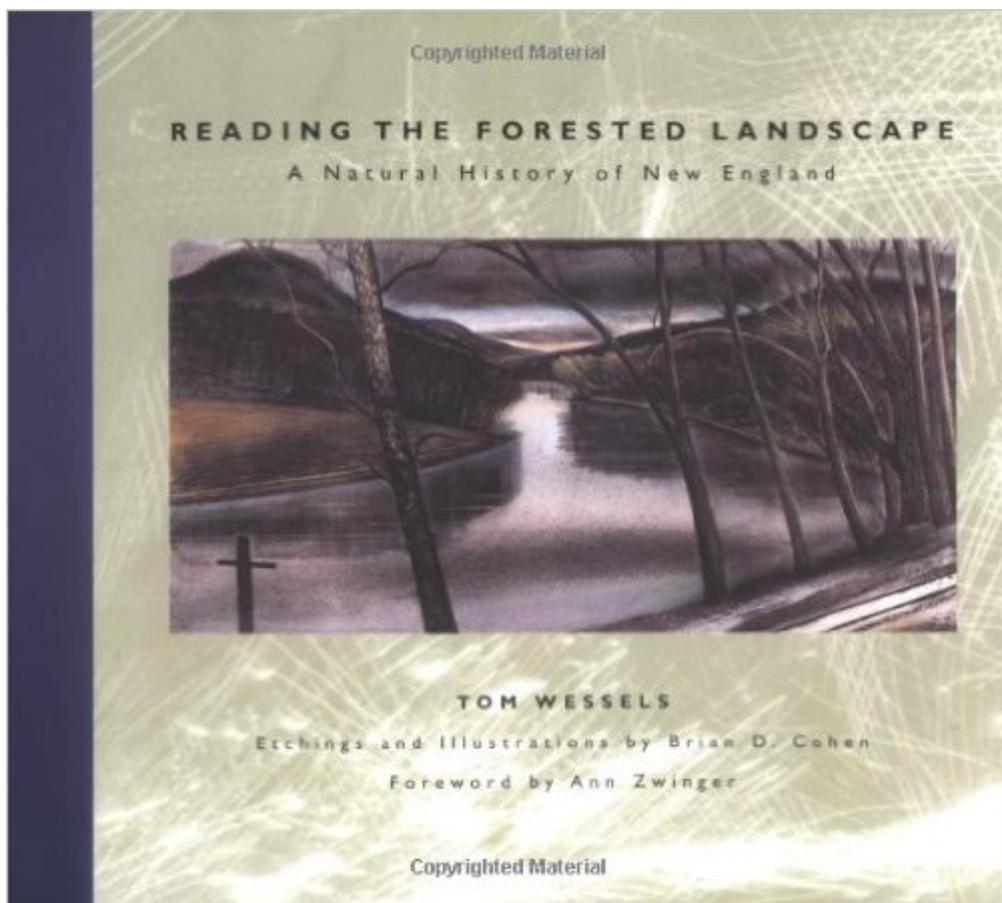


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Reading The Forested Landscape: A Natural History Of New England



Synopsis

Landscape is much more than scenery to be observed or even terrain to be traveled, as this fascinating and many-layered book vividly shows us. Etched into the land is the history of how we have inhabited it, the storms and fires that have shaped it, and its response to these and other changes. An intrepid sleuth and articulate tutor, Wessels teaches us to read a landscape the way we might solve a mystery. What exactly is the meaning of all those stone walls in the middle of the forest? Why do beech and birch trees have smooth bark when the bark of all other northern species is rough? How do you tell the age of a beaver pond and determine if beavers still live there? Why are pine trees dominant in one patch of forest and maples in another? What happened to the American chestnut? Turn to this book for the answers, and no walk in the woods will ever be the same. 60 black-and-white etchings and illustrations

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (72 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

Reading the Forested Landscape, first of all, plainly deserves readers outside of New England. While the particular forests the book looks at are in the northeast, Tom Wessels' approach and style won't be lost on anyone with an interest in natural history. Give this as a gift to a birding friend, or for someone to keep in their cabin. The bedrock of the book is patient, graceful storytelling. At the outset of each chapter, Wessels shows us a simple print of a forest. He asks us to wonder what made that forest, and then he leads us, in unaffected voice, through his thinking as he answers that question. Why is this maple here? Are the trees here fire damaged? Wessels describes the outlines from

which we can read a larger story. Each chapter is a little mystery, in a sense. Those little puzzles are fun. It's apparent how carefully Forested Landscape was crafted. This isn't just a collection of portraits; the chapters progress from one to the next intelligently. For example, you learn how to recognize a fire in one chapter; at the beginning of the next, Wessels starts by asking whether a similar fire has taken place in this new spot. That's a simple transition, but it really helps you stay in the flow of the writing. The author's smart enough to reinforce what you've learned at the same time that he's establishing continuity in the larger story. This book reads through wonderfully. And there's a bigger picture you're reading toward, too. Each chapter also includes a broader natural history subject related to its particular forest. You've seen a few trees, and you've puzzled out the sort of setting you're looking at; now, by touching on a bigger natural historical theme, you place that forest in the natural world as a whole.

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