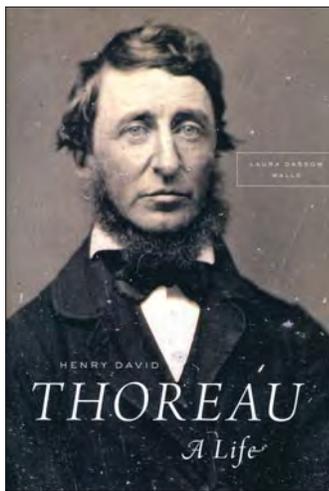


## BOOKS OF INTEREST

by Jason Howard, Eben Lehman, and James G. Lewis

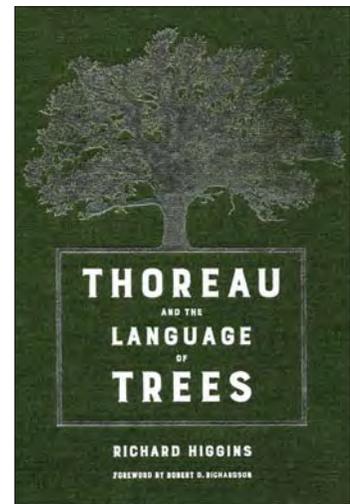
With the possible exception of John Muir, no figure in American conservation history is as misunderstood by the public and coopted by the environmental movement as Henry David Thoreau. Out-of-context quotes are splashed across posters of idyllic nature scenes, reducing Thoreau's thoughtful and thought-filled books and essays to aphorisms or even dicta. (Richard Judd's article elsewhere in this issue about Thoreau's famous phrase, "in Wildness is the preservation of the World," offers a case study of sorts.) Much is lost when Thoreau's rigorous labor of several years is condensed to fewer than 140 characters: today's smartphone-dependent world is rendering us ignorant of Thoreau's work and writings, which require time and effort to absorb and appreciate. Fortunately, we now have Laura Dassow Walls's new biography to encourage us to go back to the source material. As she notes in the preface of *Henry David Thoreau: A Life* (University of Chicago Press, 2017), Thoreau held



many jobs (land surveyor, writer, and teacher, to name a few) and wrote on many subjects. But biographers and historians "have invented two Thoreaus, both of them hermits, yet radically at odds with each other. One speaks for nature; the other for social justice." Both emanate from the same roots: "he found society in nature, and nature he found everywhere, including the town center and the human

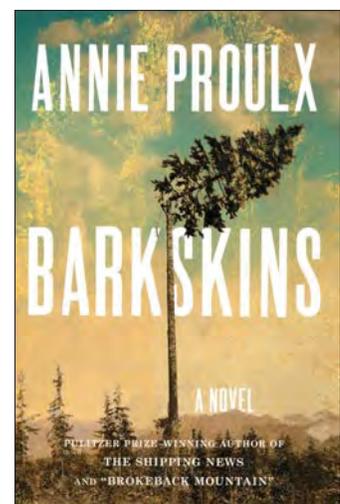
heart." Because both Thoreaus are found in his writings, Walls chose to examine Thoreau's life as a writer. (She previously looked at Thoreau the scientist in *Seeing New Worlds: Henry David Thoreau and Nineteenth-Century Natural Science*, published in 1995.) Thus we are given a well-rounded biography of a man some have portrayed as a hermit and misanthrope, which he certainly could be at times, but who in his lifetime was also known as a loving son and devoted friend. This important work captures Thoreau in all his complexity and contradictions, and makes him and his writings accessible to all. (JL)

Speaking of making Thoreau accessible, Richard Higgins also does so by exploring Thoreau's deep connection to trees in *Thoreau and the Language of Trees* (University of California Press, 2017). He celebrated them with beautiful prose, depicted them in sketches, nurtured his soul by spending time among them, and studied them closely as a naturalist. The bond was never broken, writes Higgins. "As a saunterer, poet, surveyor, and naturalist, Thoreau loved trees and wrote about them his whole adult life. In the 1850s, he began to study them in depth.... His detailed observations about the growth and life span of trees, their methods of propagation and how they succeed each other in the forest, although mostly ignored in professional forestry, were decades ahead of his time." His devotion and interest were so great that it ultimately cost him his life. It was while counting rings in hickory trees on a cold and rainy December day in 1860 that he caught a cold that quickly worsened and turned into bronchitis, and then the tuberculosis from which he never recovered. Each of the book's ten chapters contains a short essay and a selection of one hundred excerpts from his writings about trees, which are largely taken from his two-million-word journal. Each excerpt is accompanied by a photograph by the author or by Herbert Wendell Cleason, who documented Thoreau's world a century ago, or by a sketch by Thoreau him-



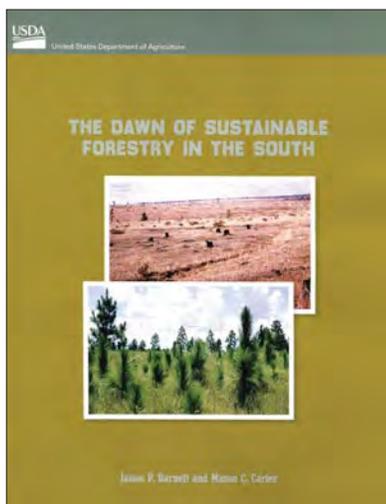
self. The chapters vary in focus. Some explore Thoreau's different emotional or scientific responses to trees. One is about his deep affinity for "an iconic American tree," the eastern white pine; two are about his romantic views of old trees. This format invites one to dip into the book to read random journal entries, even after one has read it cover to cover. (JL)

It's not often that fiction writers turn to forest history for inspiration or setting. And it is even rarer when the novelist is a writer of the caliber of Annie Proulx, winner of multiple awards, including the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. In *Barkskins* (Simon and Schuster, 2016), she has produced an epic



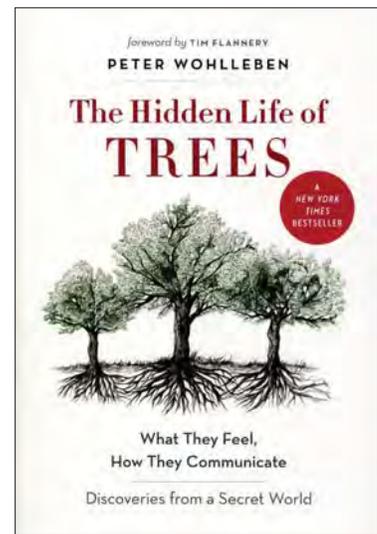
tale of two men, René Sel and Charles Duquet, and their descendants spanning more than three hundred years. In 1693, the two men come to New France as indentured servants, having been transported from the slums of Paris to cut trees for their master for the next three years. Duquet flees the first chance he gets and makes his fortune in the New World by harvesting furs and milling lumber. Sel stays, dutifully clearing farmland for the *seigneur*. He eventually is forced to marry Mari, the Mi'kmaq woman who had been living with the master. Their offspring, considered Native American, are forced to make their way in a white man's world. Meanwhile, Duquet establishes himself in Boston and marries the daughter of a Dutch business partner, anglicizes the family name to Duke, and with his sons builds a timber empire. Their stories unspool across three centuries as each family engages with forests and deforestation on its own terms. Proulx is known for her beautiful prose, which is on full display throughout the novel's more than seven hundred pages. (JL)

After reading the feature article “Causes and Consequences of the First Lumber Boom in Louisiana and the Gulf South” in this issue, those wanting to know what happened after the southern pine lumber industry fell on hard times in the 1920s can pick up *The Dawn of Sustainable Forestry in the South* (USDA Forest Service, 2017). This short book (38 pages; available online for free) takes an in-depth look at the boom years and details how the federal government and private industry responded to the market's collapse. Over three chapters, authors James P. Barnett and Mason C. Carter use biographical sketches of three



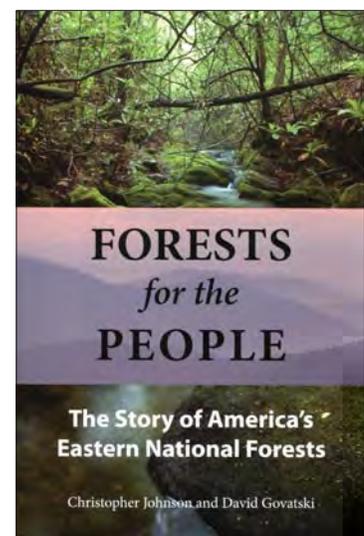
men to help tell the story of the beginning of reforestation: “The Influence of Henry E. Hardtner” introduces readers to the founder of the Urania Lumber Company and one of the first advocates of forest management; “The Action of William H. Sullivan” focuses on the general manager of the Great Southern Lumber Company, who embraced Hardtner’s ideas of employing both natural and artificial regeneration; and “The Persistence of Philip C. Wakeley” tells of the U.S. Forest Service researcher whose collaboration with Great Southern (and his later work at the agency’s Stuart Nursery) had a huge influence on tree nursery production. Their efforts, combined with that of others in both public and private forestry more briefly discussed, laid the foundation for a “golden age of industrial forestry in the South following World War II.” (JL)

Every so often, a book comes through that makes a person stop and think and transforms one’s view of the natural world. *The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate—Discoveries from a Secret World* (Greystone Books, 2015), by Peter Wohlleben, is one of these. Wohlleben, a forester for the village of Hümmel in the Eifel Mountains in western Germany, started his career as a forester, one who admittedly viewed trees for their market value and little else. When he began organizing survival training and log-cabin tours for tourists about twenty-five years ago, conversations with his visitors “reignited” his lifelong love of nature and helped him to look anew at the trees he previously ignored. A gnarled, twisted tree, for example, which to a forester had low commercial value, now became fascinating for its aesthetic appeal. His investigations—unfocused and deliberate; some in the field, some in the professional literature—revealed to him that trees are social creatures, capable of communication, feelings, and pain, and even of aiding one another in distress. With this knowledge in hand, he set about changing how he managed the community’s forest and persuaded his employer to do so as well. The village subsequently banned the use of machines for harvesting trees out of a desire to minimize the pain to the tree community. The book is an introduction to forest ecology and silviculture, and the author makes the science accessible and fascinating to the novice. He reveals one amazing fact after another. How does a professional forester bring silviculture and forest



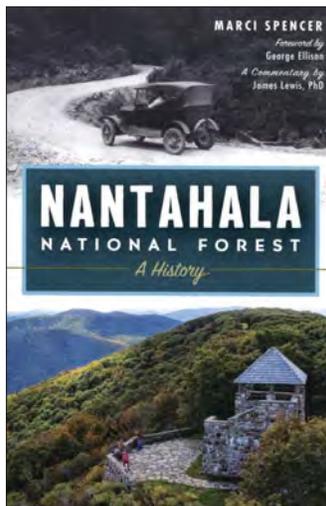
ecology to a general audience? In part by posing and addressing questions that people have about different tree species and how they grow or behave. Although his study is rooted in his experience working with the beech, spruce, and fir trees of Europe, the lessons he has learned can be universally applied. (JL)

The upcoming centennial of the establishment of the White Mountain National Forest in New England in 2018 is a good opportunity to look back on the history and legacy of the 1911 Weeks Act, the law responsible for creating the White Mountain and numerous other eastern national forests. The Weeks Act fundamentally changed the National Forest System map, and also the relationship between the federal and state governments. As written by Massachusetts Representative John Weeks, the law bearing his name gave the federal government the power to purchase private lands and



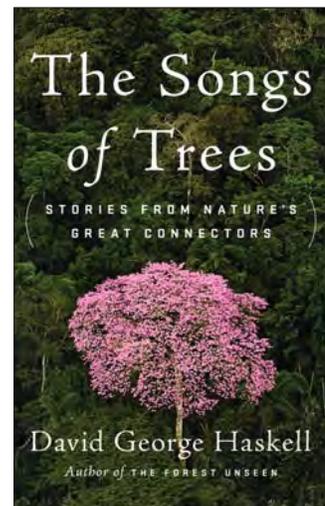
convert them into national forests to protect navigable waterways and watersheds. This narrow purpose was later eliminated, making it easier to protect more land. Section 2 of the law called for federal-state cooperation in fighting wildfires around the country. That part of the law has had an enormous effect on the nation's fire policy and both public and private forests. *Forests for the People: The Story of America's Eastern National Forests* (Island Press, 2013) is the single best volume about the Weeks Act and its legacy. The book's first part tells the story of how America's eastern forests were saved in the early twentieth century and how the Weeks Act was applied to create national forests in the East, South, and Lake states. In all, 52 national forests, encompassing 25 million acres in 26 states and Puerto Rico, have been established. The second part of the book offers eight case studies to shed light on current issues facing the eastern national forests. Topics include the return of the wolf to two national forests, shale oil drilling on the Allegheny National Forest, the emerald ash borer infestation in Michigan and beyond, and the conflict between the preservation desires of the general public and the multiple-use mandate of the Forest Service. The coauthors bring a wealth of experience to their topic. David Govatski is a forester and environmental consultant who worked for the U.S. Forest Service for more than thirty years in a variety of positions, and he was involved in the Weeks Act centennial celebrations in 2011. Christopher Johnson has extensive experience in writing about nature and the environment. Both live near the White Mountain National Forest. (JL)

If she isn't already, naturalist Marci Spencer is becoming the go-to forest historian of western North Carolina. Her latest book, *Nantahala National Forest: A History* (History Press, 2017), comes just a few years after her books on the Pisgah National Forest and Clingmans Dome, the highest mountain in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. *Nantahala* is another entry in the Natural History series, which offers popular histories of natural places in the United States. Nantahala National Forest, created in 1920 as one of the Weeks Act national forests, covers a half million acres in southwestern North Carolina. It is home to such attractions as Whitewater Falls, the highest waterfall in the East, and Joyce Kilmer Memorial



Forest, one of the region's largest contiguous tracts of old-growth forest. The book is divided into four sections. The first tells the history of the region from European settlement to the present; the remaining three describe each of the three ranger districts and offer a bit more history on their most popular recreation destinations. Building on a foundation of solid research, Spencer mixes primary documents and interviews with land managers and stakeholders to good effect, creating a lively history that encourages the reader to visit the forest. The book also includes numerous photos that show off Nantahala's splendor, as well as the work of the Forest Service to manage and maintain it. (Full disclosure: FHS historian James Lewis wrote an introduction, called "A Commentary" by the publisher, for the book.) (JL)

In the winter of 1874, John Muir stood deep in the forests of the Sierra Nevada during a windstorm and took in the natural music around him. "Even when the grand anthem had swelled to its highest pitch, I could distinctly hear the varying tones of individual trees, Spruce, and Fir, and Pine, and leafless Oak," he wrote. "Each was expressing itself in its own way, singing its own song." Muir's characterization of trees as musicians, their work part of a greater natural symphony, is the springboard for David George Haskell's latest book, *The Songs of Trees: Stories from Nature's Great Connectors* (Viking, 2017). Haskell, a Pulitzer Prize finalist for his previous work, *The Forest Unseen*, reveals the sounds and stories surrounding trees, and what they tell us about the biological networks in which they live. He takes the reader on a unique journey around the world to twelve specimen trees, each representing a different species, and examines



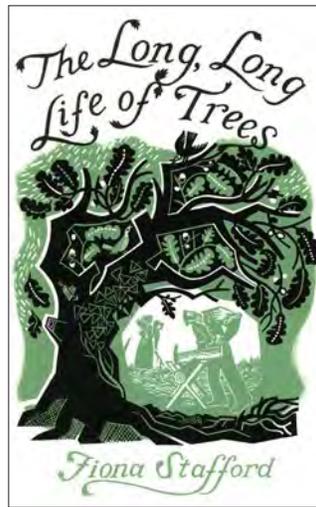
their relationships with humans and other species. Some of the trees grow in seemingly natural environments, such as a ceibo tree deep in the Amazonian rainforest of Ecuador, and a balsam fir in the boreal forest of northwestern Ontario. Also examined are trees touched directly by humans, like an olive tree at Damascus Gate outside the Old City of Jerusalem, and the Yamaki pine, or bonsai, tree given to the U.S. National Arboretum. Regardless of its location, though, Haskell delves into the biological networks surrounding each tree. This includes, of course, the literal sounds of its environment, as well as the human influences on the biological system. Each tree serves as an example of how we as humans participate in nature's networks, and how all of life is a part of these networked relationships. With this work, Haskell takes us well beyond the old philosophical question, "If a tree falls in the forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?" In fact, all trees are full of sound at every stage of their lives. More importantly, it is the story behind each of these sounds that show how trees are the "great connectors" of all living species. (EL)

The often overlooked hawthorn has played a crucial role across thousands of years of human history. *Hawthorn: The Tree That Has Nourished, Healed, and Inspired through the Ages* (Yale University Press, 2015), by Bill Vaughn, takes the reader through the fascinating political, cultural, religious, and natural history of the species. A genus of shrubs and small trees, the hawthorn has tough wood, dense branching, and sharp thorns. Vaughn opens the book with a personal story of coming across a hawthorn on his property in rural Montana. What begins as a humbling and literally painful



experience—he is impaled by a thorn while trying to remove a branch—becomes a long journey of discovery around the world, ultimately leaving him in awe. What initially looked like a foreboding mutant ultimately revealed itself to be a tree of great historical importance, as well as a unique religious and literary symbol. Vaughn journeys through thousands of years of history across North America, Europe, and China as he discovers how the hawthorn figures in everything from Celtic folklore to ancient Chinese beverages. One chapter focuses on the historical use of hawthorn as living fences, a natural barbed-wire boundary that was widely used across Europe to control livestock and assert private property rights. Other chapters look at the appearance of the tree and its thorns in both ancient pagan and early Christian iconography. Many of these ancient mystical and superstitious connections with the tree remain today, especially in Ireland, where crews reroute modern roads around hawthorn trees rather than cut them down. In an interesting side note, we learn that some people attribute the failure of John DeLorean’s auto company (of *Back to the Future* movie fame) to his ill-fated decision to cut down a hawthorn tree when siting his auto plant in Northern Ireland; shortly thereafter his company was brought to financial ruin. Overall, the book is an engaging read about an overlooked species whose importance and influence on human culture the reader will come to appreciate. (EL)

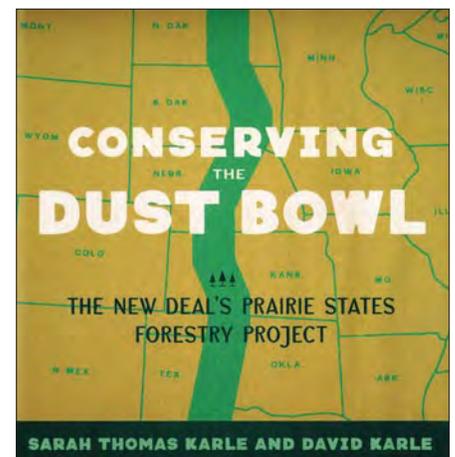
The hawthorn is among seventeen genera of trees—from ash and apple to willow and yew—explored in detail by Fiona Stafford in *The Long, Long Life of Trees* (Yale University Press, 2016). The author weaves her love of these trees into an examination



of their influence on art, literature, religion, science, technology, and culture. While focusing primarily on England, the book also takes the reader on a journey through other parts of the world. Stafford is a professor of English at the University of Oxford, and her engaging prose and poetic language—not to mention her command of history and literature—bring each tree to life on the page. She considers the trees’ symbolic importance (the olive as a metaphor for peace, the apple as a tree of knowledge, the willow representing loss), practical applications (ash for walking sticks and airplanes), and cultural associations (the rowan tree in Scottish folk tradition). Stafford also examines individual trees of special historical importance, like the elm under which John Wesley held open prayer meetings, the Ankerwyke yew where Henry VIII courted Anne Boleyn, and the horse chestnut tree in Amsterdam that Anne Frank could glimpse from her small window while in hiding from the Nazis. The stories show how trees are intertwined with human life, contributing to life, art, and culture in ways we sometimes take for granted. (EL)

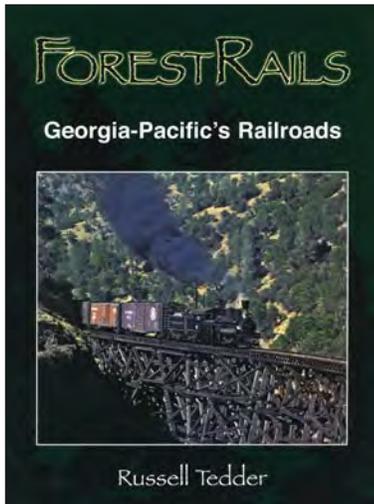
By the early 1930s the United States was reeling from the effects of one of the worst ecological disasters in history. Decades of unsustainable large-scale farming practices had exacerbated drought conditions and unleashed a rolling onslaught of fierce dust storms across the Great Plains. On a tour across the country, President Franklin D. Roosevelt witnessed firsthand the environmental and economic destruction in the Dust Bowl. His response was a New Deal program to plant a wall of trees in a north-south line to help combat soil erosion. The story of this program is the subject of

*Conserving the Dust Bowl: The New Deal’s Prairie States Forestry Project* (LSU Press, 2017), by Sarah Thomas Karle and David Karle. This is a detailed history of Roosevelt’s ambition to create a “shelterbelt” from Texas to Canada, and how it economically and ecologically transformed the region. After exploring the events leading to the conditions of the Dust Bowl, the authors examine the creation, implementation, and legacy of the Prairie States Forestry Project. They also provide insight into Roosevelt’s interest in the natural environment, and the influence of other figures, such as forester Raphael Zon, on the president’s decision-making. Roosevelt got his “Great Wall of Trees,” which ultimately proved effective in multiple ways. In this cooperative project involving the U.S. Forest Service, the Civilian Conservation Corps, and the Works Progress Administration, thousands of unemployed young men were given jobs planting trees. And despite debates within the forestry profession over its scientific merit, the more than 220 million trees planted between



1935 and 1942 succeeded in controlling wind erosion, protecting farms, and creating habitat for birds and other wildlife. Many sections of these shelterbelts endure today, and the authors conclude the book with a photo essay of tree belts in Nebraska in 2015. Providing an excellent history of an ambitious moment in American environmental policy, the book also offers lessons in how we might adapt to future ecological crises. (EL)

The Georgia-Pacific Company was founded in 1927 as a wholesaler of hardwood lumber and over the ensuing decades developed into one of the leading forest products companies in the world. The tremendous growth of the company



in the first half of the twentieth century can be largely attributed not just to its shrewd acquisitions but also to the operation of an expansive railroad network—the subject of *Forest Rails: Georgia-Pacific's Railroads* (White River Productions, 2016), by Russell Tedder. This is a meticulous, comprehensive history of every rail line owned or operated at some point by Georgia-Pacific throughout the country. The author gives the reader detailed information on each line, from construction through its eventual sale or abandonment. The growth of Georgia-Pacific's railroad network also directly parallels the history of the company's logging and manufacturing operations. Though not a company history in the traditional sense, the book provides insight into Georgia-Pacific's expansion to the West and, more importantly, gives a ground-level view of moving timber from the forest to mills and other points of sale. Tedder also shows the direct connection between the U.S. forest products industry and the railroads. Steam engine locomotives were an integral part of the industry from the late nineteenth through mid-twentieth centuries, and diesel-electric trains remained important in many areas for decades afterward. There is no better source on this subject matter than Tedder, who spent his entire career working in shortline railroading. Tedder, who retired in 1997 as director of Corporate Rail Service at Georgia-Pacific, brings a wealth of knowledge of the company's railroad operations to this book. Its 450 pages are packed with historical photos, and he provides numerous detailed maps of long-lost railroad lines. You will not find a more exhaustive history of this subject. (EL)

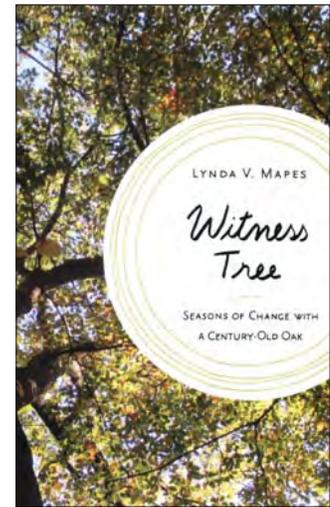
Published to coincide with the National

Park Service's centennial, the revised edition of *Challenge of the Big Trees: The History of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* (George F. Thompson Publishing, 2016) is most welcome. The new edition notes major changes in the parks since 1990, when the book was first published. Authors William C. Tweed and Lary M. Dilsaver also discuss climate change and evolving attitudes toward nature. These two parks are famous for being home to some of the largest trees in the world, but they also protect important cultural and natural resources, including important watersheds. The history of Sequoia (established in 1890) and Kings Canyon (established in 1890 as General Grant National Park), which adjoin each other in the Sierra Nevada, dates back to the early days in the national park movement and thus offers a microcosmic history of nature preservation in the United States. The challenges of maintaining and protecting these parks, which have been jointly administered since 1943, includes fending



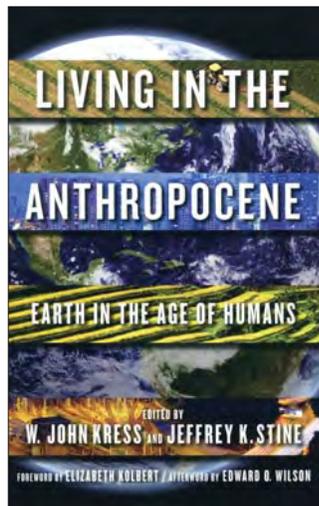
off developers and at turns clashing and cooperating with the U.S. Forest Service, which administers adjacent forests. Historic photos and custom maps help tell the story. If one ever plans to visit Sequoia and or King Canyon National Park, this book will enrich the experience. (JH)

Climate change is a real and frightening issue, portending dangerous weather extremes and rising sea levels. Yet for the average person, the volume of research and publications on the issue can be overwhelming. With so much information on so many aspects of the phenomenon, it may be hard to grasp what is happening on a global scale. To make this subject relatable, Lynda V. Mapes decided to find



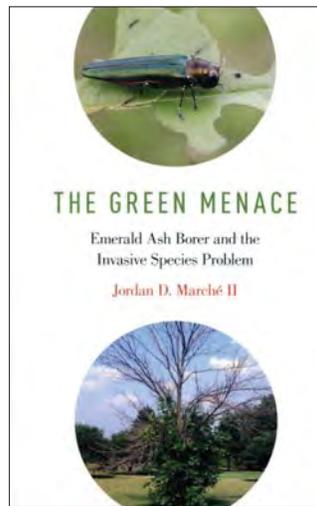
out what an individual tree in the Harvard Forest might tell us about climate change. She explores this question in *Witness Tree: Seasons of Change with a Century-Old Oak* (Bloomsbury, 2017). By “interviewing” a red oak that sprouted in 1905, a time when deforestation had peaked in New England, and putting its story in context, Mapes makes the vast subject of climate change relatable. She came up with the idea following a research fellowship at MIT, where she was investigating how trees respond to climate change. The result is an engaging approach to educating lay readers about the consequences of climate change. The book also makes use of physics and ecological and biological data to interpret the “testimony” of the oak. *Witness Tree* adds tremendous value to the climate change conversation. (JH)

Besides climate change, another topic in current environmental literature is Anthropocene, “the Age of Humans.” The term, whose official adoption is still being debated by geologists, is slowly entering the lexicon because scientists increasingly are recognizing that the human species is making major changes to the planet's ecosystems: on that there is no debate. Changes to the atmosphere most likely began with the invention of agriculture and have accelerated since humans started burning coal and oil. *Living in the Anthropocene: Earth in the Age of Humans*, edited by John W. Kress and Jeffrey K. Stine, with a foreword by Elizabeth Kolbert and an afterword by Edward O. Wilson (Smithsonian Books, 2017), offers thirty-two short essays (most are less than five pages) by experts across many disciplines who explore the topic from scientific, anthropological, social,



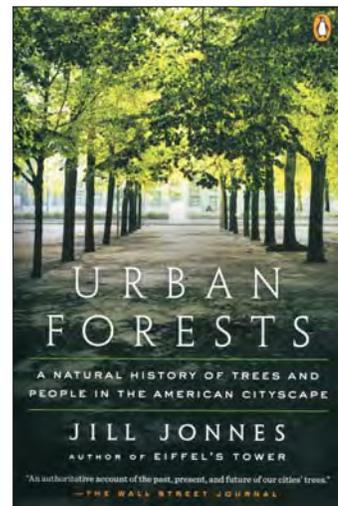
artistic, economic, and historical perspectives. The book is divided into five sections, each with a two-page introduction: “A Changing Planet,” “Drivers of Change,” “Responding to Change,” “Visual Culture,” and “The Way Forward.” Essays in the “Visual Culture” section examine the depiction and interpretation of the Anthropocene in paintings, sculpture, and film, with essays on art created by Africans and another about indigenous people in the Arctic—two groups disproportionately affected by their fellow human beings in other regions. Two essays focus on forests. Sean M. McMahon’s “Temperate Forests: A Tale of the Anthropocene” (in “Drivers of Change”) explores the history of human use, misuse, mismanagement, and restoration of temperate forests, warning that humans are doing to tropical forests what was done to temperate ones at their own peril. Robin L. Chazdon’s essay in the “Responding to Change” section, “Forest Succession and Human Agency in an Uncertain Future,” warns that the mutual partnership between people and forests means nothing less than that the fate of the human race is at stake; conversely, she writes, “Restoring the world’s forests will also restore humanity.” The book is not all doom and gloom. The six essays in the closing section offer hope and some solutions—none of which are easy—for mitigating the damage humans are doing to the planet. Overall, the book provides an excellent introduction to the topic. (JL)

Climate change is not the only threat to trees and the environment. The proliferation of invasive insects, at times aided by climate change, is another. Ash is one of several tree species in North America endangered by an insect. Ash is a common



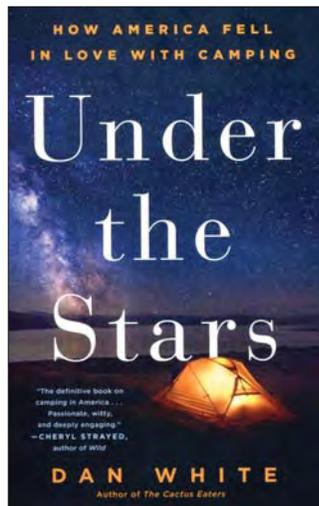
street tree in cities, where its large canopy provides shade and mitigates the heat island effect, and its wood is used in baseball bats, tool handles, furniture, and flooring. Because of an insect smaller than a penny, however, ash trees are dying at an alarming rate. The emerald ash borer (EAB) arrived in the Detroit area from Asia around 2002 and has been spreading largely unchecked since. Female borers lay eggs inside the bark of ash trees, and the larvae feed out of sight. The insect is usually found only after it’s too late to save the tree. Jordan D. Marché II, who wrote about this topic in the Fall 2012 issue of this magazine, offers the first book-length look at the pest and the varied responses to its presence in *The Green Menace: Emerald Ash Borer and the Invasive Species Problem* (Oxford University Press, 2017). Though it is a case study, the book also addresses larger issues concerning invasives, such as the inadvertent transport of insects, regulations to prevent their introduction, and state and federal agencies’ efforts to enforce those regulations. With the likelihood that the EAB is just one of many invasive pests that will threaten North American forests in the coming decades, *The Green Menace* provides a cautionary tale about the need for vigilance in both urban and rural forest settings. (JH)

If the previous title has you interested in the role urban trees play in our lives, consider Jill Jonnes’s *Urban Forests: A Natural History of Trees and People in the American Cityscape* (Viking Penguin, 2016). Jonnes, a Maryland Master Naturalist and founder of the Baltimore Tree Trust, has produced an engaging history of urban trees in the United States by weaving together the biographies of people and the tree species they have favored in cities. She highlights



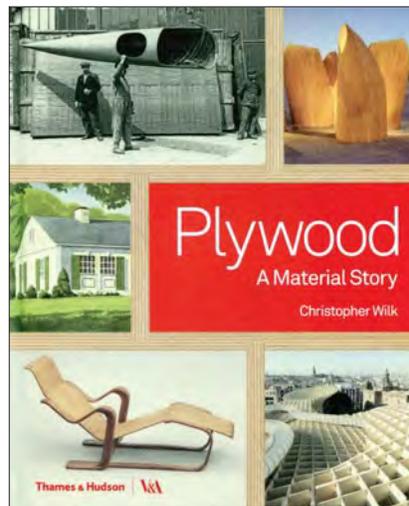
the American presidents, explorers, scientists, nurserymen, and other individuals who have had a hand in creating tree cities and livable spaces. Some, like Charles S. Sargent of Harvard’s Arnold Arboretum, will be familiar to most readers, but she also brings to light long-forgotten figures like Frank Meyer and David Fairchild, two U.S. Department of Agriculture employees whose work gathering and importing trees and seeds in the early twentieth century transformed America’s urban landscapes. *Urban Forests* looks at the Japanese cherry trees in the nation’s capital, the American chestnut and American elm, Bradford Callery pears, and the unintended consequences of single-species urban forests. Other chapters explain current issues like invasive pests and various blights, with interviews of forest pathologists and entomologists. Her concluding chapter reviews many of the efforts being undertaken by both national and local groups around the country to mitigate climate change and reduce human-caused issues like water and air pollution by planting more trees and promoting urban forestry. (JH)

Camping is a memorable experience that brings one close to nature. Whether one prefers primitive camping and lives off the land or goes glamping with all the comforts of home, sleeping out of doors has an enduring appeal. “I love camping. I hate camping,” proclaims Dan White, a writer and avid camper who has spent more than six hundred nights out. “I can’t seem to stop. In case you haven’t noticed, campouts hardly ever go the way you want them to go.” In *Under the Stars: How America Fell in Love with Camping* (Henry Holt, 2016), he explores the history of recreational camping, which began in the nineteenth



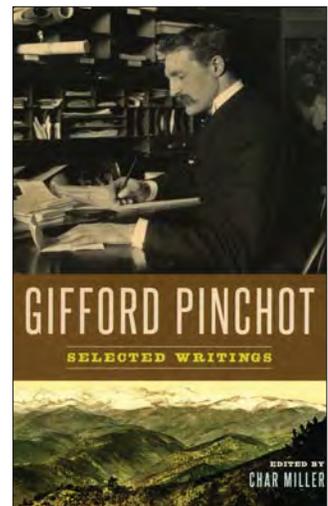
century mostly as a tonic for—or bulwark against—the modern world, and mixes it with accounts of his own camping experiences in places like the Sierras, the Adirondacks, and the Everglades. His famous “campers” of the past include Henry David Thoreau, who helped shape America’s perspective of natural areas and the outdoors experience, including the author’s. White also describes the travels of John Muir, Ernest Thompson Seton, and even the Merry Tramps of Oakland, a late-1800s group of middle-class California urbanites who traveled by rail to camp in spectacular places. White’s own accounts are entertaining. He decided not to write about a period of camping without trying it for himself using period equipment, and so the reader follows along as White struggles to light a fire for his wife and daughter on their first family camping trip. He even attempted to emulate Joseph Knowles, the early-twentieth-century outdoor celebrity known as “Nature Man,” by camping naked. Yet getting stung by wasps during that excursion and attacked by a demoiselle crane while glamping in Sonoma, California, has not stopped him. *Under the Stars* is not a comprehensive history of camping, but it reminds us of the complex relationship many of us have with sleeping al fresco. (JH)

Made by gluing together layers of cross-grained veneers, plywood can be stronger than solid wood. The value and history of this versatile product are explored in Christopher Wilk’s *Plywood: A Material Story* (Thames and Hudson, 2017). Wilk, Keeper of the Furniture, Textiles and Fashion Department at the Victorian and Albert Museum in London, prepared this book for a museum exhibition, *Plywood:*



*Material of the Modern World*. (Wilk conducted a portion of his research for the book and exhibit at the Forest History Society, and *Plywood* contains images from the Alvin J. Huss Archives and cites articles in *American Lumberman* and *Southern Lumberman* in the Carl Weyerhaeuser Library.) To the general public, plywood may be just another material used in buildings. But its versatility, as Wilk demonstrates in this well-researched and heavily illustrated book, seems limited only by one’s imagination. His book is the first comprehensive study of the history of plywood and its myriad applications, from its invention in the 1700s to the present. He looks at the veneer-making process and plywood’s use over time: building construction, high-end modernist furniture, even clothing. In the 1920s one manufacturer made veneer swimming costumes for women to demonstrate that its product was waterproof. The introduction of synthetic adhesives in the mid-1930s improved the strength and structural reliability of plywood and eventually transformed the entire plywood industry. In the eight decades since, plywood has gone in and out of fashion with furniture designers and building architects, but it has never completely disappeared. Wilk’s book entertainingly shows why. (JH)

The founding chief of the U.S. Forest Service and a two-time governor of Pennsylvania, Gifford Pinchot (1865–1946) was a central figure in the early-twentieth-century conservation movement in the United States and a pivotal figure in the history of his adopted state in the 1920s and 1930s. The forester-turned-politician was a prolific writer, correspondent, and essayist. His manuscript collection at the Library



of Congress is one of its largest, totaling more than one million items. A national figure for more than half a century, his interests ranged far beyond forestry; he wrote on energy policy, Prohibition laws, and the influence of women in politics, to name a few issues. These topics, and of course forestry, are all covered in *Gifford Pinchot: Selected Writings* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017). Char Miller, Pinchot’s leading biographer, has done researchers a great service by going through the man’s myriad publications and whittling them down into this handy, well-conceived volume. Miller’s introduction to the book offers a good summation for those not familiar with Pinchot’s accomplishments or his writing life. The collection of essays, articles, speeches, and letters is divided into five parts: “Forests, Forestry, and Foresters,” “War and Peace,” “Governing the Keystone State,” “Water, Energy, and Power,” and “Natural Engagements.” The last section shows a side of Pinchot his critics rarely acknowledge. They are quick to lambaste him as a utilitarian conservationist who favored building a dam in Yosemite National Park to provide water to San Francisco. But the nation’s first forester loved nature. He could write reflectively, if not a little romantically, about the joys of fishing with his wife, and he could be rather evocative when talking about sailing across the Pacific Ocean. On the whole, this is an excellent introduction to Pinchot. (JL) □