

Returning North with the Spring

John R. Harris

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In 1947, naturalist Edwin Way Teale and his wife traveled the East Coast from Florida to the Canadian border. Their journey, the subject of *North with the Spring*, had a dual purpose: scientific—to track the coming of spring and assess the health of the environment; and private—to work through their grief at the death of their son in the Second World War.

For his *Returning North with the Spring*, John R. Harris, executive director of the Monadnock Institute of Nature, Place, and Culture at Franklin Pierce University, retraced Teale's journey in 2012, noting how ecosystems had changed in the intervening sixty-five years—whether for better or worse. At Everglades National Park, his first stop, there is much evidence of recent invasive species. The 2,000-strong flocks of plumed waterbirds Teale observed are far diminished, while certain species like the limpkin have simply vanished. Harris visits multiple refuges and learns that Florida's efforts at restoration are complicated by a sixfold population increase between 1950 and 2010 and the desire to strike a balance between preservation and tourism.

Harris's later stops include Georgia's Okefenokee Swamp, South Carolina's Bulls Island, the Great Smoky Mountains, and the New Jersey Pine Barrens. Historical records he finds at Monticello and Walden Pond suggest that spring now arrives seven to ten days early, an acceleration that climate change will only exacerbate. Back home in New Hampshire, though, he finds a conservation success story: a thriving bald eagle population.

The book is in conversation not only with Teale's work but with nature writers from Henry David Thoreau to Annie Dillard. An appealingly offbeat blend of travelogue, biography, and environmental study, this book makes conservation personal.

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