

The Heartbeat of Trees: Embracing Our Ancient Bond with Forests and Nature

Peter Wohlleben

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The nature essays of Peter Wohlleben's *The Heartbeat of Trees* beckon people into the woods, for their own good and for the good of trees.

A follow-up to *The Hidden Life of Trees*, this collection showcases the interconnectedness of humans and nature. It begins by addressing a troubling polarity in modern thought: there's growing knowledge about how humans need nature, but also unprecedented depletion of the natural world at the hands of human beings. The book urges leaning into the former, for the benefit of nature and ourselves: quite simply, it says, we need each other.

The essays delve into the physical, mental, and emotional connections that people experience with nature, asking direct, unexpected questions, like "Why do we see trees in color?" The answer lies in the science of the human eye, but the book also goes much deeper in getting there. Beginning with chapters on each of the five senses, it looks at the power trees have over human enjoyment, health, and life. Then, it goes beyond the physical senses to the inner sense of perceiving, emotional responses, and the spiritual depth that is elemental and ingrained in people. Nature, the book says, even has an impact on human relationships: a chapter on walking in the woods with children, letting them dictate the pace, is a particular highlight.

Wohlleben takes a multidisciplinary approach, incorporating history, science, medicine, and mysticism. He balances poetic descriptions with analytical thoughts; beauty is at the heart of both. The result is a text that is full of wonder and insatiable curiosity, and that invites love for humanity and the natural world, understanding that the two are inseparably linked—and valuable.

The nature essays of *The Heartbeat of Trees* reveal the humanity-saving power of natural conservation.

MELISSA WUSKE (May / June 2021)

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