

The Three-Minute Outdoorsman: Wild Science from Magnetic Deer to Mumbling Carp

Robert M. Zink

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This book answers both typical and exotic questions about nature in a plain and non-condescending manner.

The Three-Minute Outdoorsman is a series of interesting, loosely organized, and easily readable vignettes about animals in the wild. Most of the creatures covered are game animals, such as grouse, or otherwise of interest to outdoorsmen, like house sparrows.

Outdoors enthusiasts of all types will find this accessible book interesting, but it is particularly well suited to hunters. The text specifically explores problems relating to hunters, such as bagging birds banded for scientific study, and unapologetically relates the author's opinion on several controversies related to hunting. Zink's passion for the subject is clear, and whether readers agree or disagree, they will almost definitely appreciate the thoughtful, well-informed commentary presented in this work. Ornithologists will also find much food for thought here; Zink's background in this area is clearly evident in the many chapters devoted to ducks, geese, loons, and other birds.

Zink also makes a number of calls for environmental consciousness, particularly citing the effects of animal population mismanagement. In doing this, he touches upon a number of complicated political issues, from the NRA's support of the legality of lead shot to the resurgence and population control of the Canada goose. While acknowledging that the topic of environmentalism is charged, the author usually attempts to remain apolitical. While he sometimes succeeds in walking this tightrope, he generally concludes that humans are affecting the environment adversely, a point supported by his own research and expertise, but also one likely to spark debate among his audience.

The facts related in the book comprise a string of easily digested pop-sci bits that live up to the title's promise of delivery of information within three minutes. While this format sometimes reads like a laundry list, skipping to the next section is never a problem. As easy to take back up as to put aside, the book will appeal to any outdoorsman with a few minutes to kill while waiting in a blind. Zink's casual, conversational writing style completes the book's appeal. Its only serious weak point as a nonfiction work is a lack of a bibliography, an unfortunate lapse in a piece that is otherwise so well sourced.

Nature provides plenty of mysteries for both hunters and bird watchers to ponder as they spend hours observing it. Reading this book is a fine way to accentuate that time.

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