FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Reference

Writing Naturally: A Down-to-Earth Guide to Nature Writing
David Petersen
Johnson Books
978-1-55566-273-8
(June 30, 2001)

"Our ability to perceive quality in nature begins, as

in art, with the pretty. It expands through successive stages of the beautiful to values as yet uncaptured by language," writes Aldo Leopold in A Sand County Almanac (1948). The strength of Petersen's book is that he uses many of our most enduring classics to illustrate that we have not given up our desire to ensnare nature in words.

Although we as humans have our considerable graces, harmony with the natural world is not one of them. Ours is a history of widening disengagement from the earth of our origin. We persist in insulating ourselves from our ecosystem. At the very least, we should know where we live, what particular part of the universe we inhabit, what the earth itself looks and feels like under our feet. As Wendell Berry says, "If you don't know where you are, you don't know who you are."

Petersen resonates with his crony, Edward Abbey, at his boisterous, gritty and lyrical best. This text is a rich, spirited rant, exploring the densely rich landscape of the inseparable nature of writer and place. Writing Naturally is a precise, thoughtful, entertaining and impeccably informed guide for published and aspiring nature writers.

The author "is a recovering Marine Corps helicopter pilot, a reformed mailman" and a former magazine editor. "He is the perpetrator of nine previous works of nonfiction" (including Elkheart, The Nearby Faraway, Ghost Grizzlies, and Among the Elk) "all of which have met with generous acclaim and parsimonious sales," as well as editor of three volumes (Bloodsport, A Hunter's Heart and Confessions of a Barbarian: Selections from the Journals of Edward Abbey).

Petersen's latest release is alive with anecdote and teeming with practical insight, borne of a long familiarity with his two great loves: nature and nature writing. It evokes a soaring grace that's both inspired and inspiring. It sharpens our awareness of the beauty around us-

admonishing us to shed our excess baggage and scientific sophistication and open ourselves to wonder. To meditate on wholeness, cosmic rhythms, and the slow cycles of seasonal change, and to write it down.

After all, as Edward Abbey states, “Wilderness begins in the human mind.”