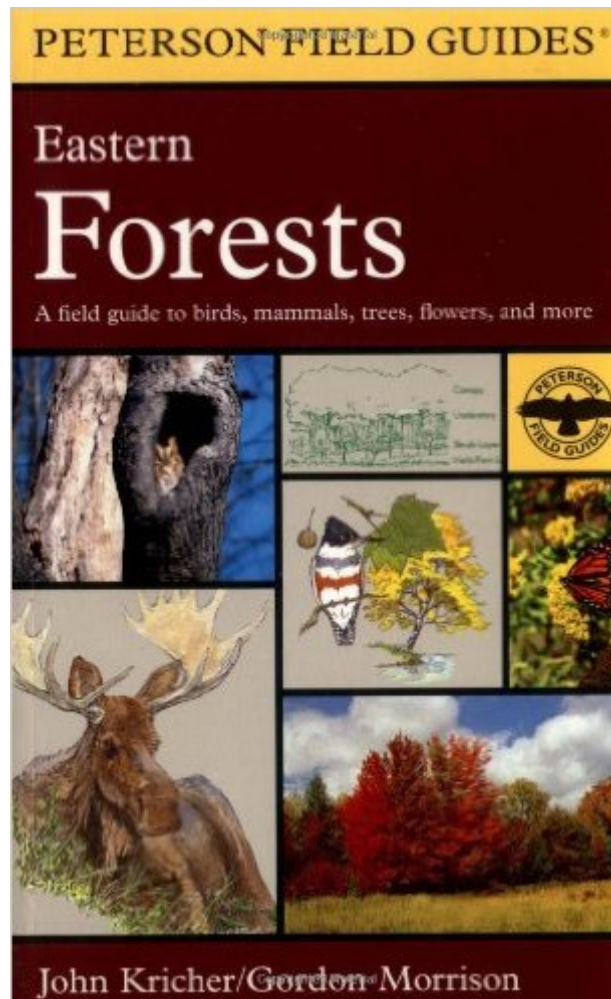


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A Field Guide To Eastern Forests: North America (Peterson Field Guides)



Synopsis

This field guide includes all the flora and fauna you're most likely to see in the forests of eastern North America. With 53 full-color plates and 80 color photos illustrating trees, birds, mammals, wildflowers, mushrooms, reptiles, amphibians, butterflies, moths, beetles, and other insects.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a great field guide that covers many aspects of forests East of the Great Plains. Although it covers many common species of both animal and plant, it is not overly helpful for positively identifying individual species; and if one wants that, you are better off with a more specific field guide (i.e., Eastern Birds). It does, however, detail the workings of a forest and accompanies this fascinating text with 53 color plates, 80 color photos and many black and white drawings. In the first few chapters, it demonstrates the different forest types through indicator species; and it details the process of Old Field succession, and the animals and plants that come and go as the process progresses. In the last chapters adaptation, and seasonal patterns are covered. I would highly recommend this field guide for any one who would like to know how a forest works.

The purpose of this guide is not to assist one in identifying species of flora and fauna found in the Eastern Forest--such a tome would be monumental in size--but rather to instill in the reader an understanding of the forest's general dynamics. The book is divided into eight sections; they are:1) How to use this book2) Forest field marks3) Eastern forest communities4) Disturbance and pioneer

plants5) Adaptation6) Patterns of spring7) Nature in summer8) Autumn and winterThis book is an excellent beginning point for those who want to develop a better understanding of forest ecology. I highly recommend it.

Though this guide and its companion Western forest edition have been in print for over a decade, I only stumbled on it last year. It concisely provides the missing links between other field guides to plants, fungi, insects, spiders, reptiles, amphibians, birds, mammals, tracks, fossils ... you get the drift. As a hiker, bird-watcher or -feeder, observer, photographer or amateur naturalist, the first step is usually simple identification of species. (With summer warblers, of course, the first step is actually seeing the bird in question.) In the same way that traditional field guides provide portable I.D. info, the ECOLOGY version helps you understand the change you see as you hike down out of a Beech-Maple forest into an Oak-Hickory stand, or the subtle differences when a Northern Riverine Forest segues into a Northern Swamp. By no means comprehensive (remember this fits in your pocket), this book, like the science of ecology itself, is composed of seemingly endless delightful digressions. Where do galls come from? How do dragonflies mate? Have you ever bothered to learn frog calls? What can the vegetation in an old field tell you about history? This volume (and by my inference the Western companion) are an excellent and fascinating addition to any field guide collection.

This Peterson guide isn't what you would expect when buying something titled a field guide. The way it's organized is almost more of a textbook, rather than a real field guide such as the Audubon books. Having said that, this is something anybody interested in learning what the earth is doing around them should pick up, regardless if you intend on using it for the field. It teaches you what to look for, and how to look at everything. So when you identify a tree or a shrub, you don't just get a name, you learn what is going on around said shrub or tree. The guide teaches you how to look at the earth and figure out what has happened, what is happening and what will happen. But, to an extent it can be of great use in the field after reading it. After you've read through it, you understand how things work. If you determine you're in an oak hickory forest, you will have learned what species of plants, birds and animals inhabit the area. You'll expect to see white-tailed deer and a squirrel, and you won't be looking for bears. Great way to get your brain working in the ecology mentality. If you want more than just this X tree is X species, and want to learn what is truly going on in the earth around you, buy this guide.

I have a number field guides from Petersen's Audubon, and Sierra Club, but this is the one that I find really helps to organize my understanding of how the various plants fit into the natural world. It's organized by specific environments, rather than by plant characteristics, so in a given chapter you'll find the most common plants and animals found in a specific niche. The focus is on "indicator species"- those species that clearly denote a certain niche. It's a different way of looking at nature; rather than focusing on individual species, as you do when using most field references, you start to see specific ecosystems as organisms, each as distinct from another as a maple is from a dandelion. If you already have (as I do) various nature guides for identifying animals, insects, ferns, trees, wildflowers and so forth, this is the book you need to help you understand how everything fits together, and why you won't find a mallow next to spruce. If you're just starting out as an amateur naturalist, I'd say this is the first book you should buy if you plan to do your exploring in the East. If you live in the West, Petersen also has the similarly excellent A Field Guide to Rocky Mountain and Southwest Forests (Peterson Field Guides) and the and the A Field Guide to California and Pacific Northwest Forests (Peterson Field Guides), and for those on the coast, the A Field Guide to the Atlantic Seashore: From the Bay of Fundy to Cape Hatteras (Peterson Field Guides).

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