25 Books for Environmentalists

by Kate Stabrowski, Nov. 4, 2021

Give the gift of a captivating and inspiring new read this holiday season

VISUAL

1. The Most Important Comic Book on Earth

Ranging from hilarious to inspirational, the 120 comics, stories and artwork in The Most Important Comic Book on Earth: Stories to Save the World (DK) will feature in its pages to save the planet. This global collaboration includes visual stories by big names such as Jane Goodall, Ricky Gervais and Andy Serkis.

2. The Comic Book Guide to Growing Food

Visual learners will appreciate The Comic Book Guide to Growing Food: Step-by-Step Vegetable Gardening For Everyone (Pen Speed Press), a graphic novel that tells the story of a young professional being taught how to garden by a retired nightelogic. Author Joseph Tychonievich also includes quick references throughout, covering topics such as the worst veggies to grow and ways to protect plants from pests.

FICTION

3. The Past Is Red

Catheryne M. Valente has crafted a post-apocalyptic tale set a century in the future, long after the Earth has flooded due to the climate crisis. The humans who survive live on an enormous floating island in a place called Gardagarden. Describing The Past is Red (Tor/Bloom) as a critique of consumer culture makes it seem like a total downer, but the novel's actually lush with humour and hope for humanity's future.

4. Waiting for the Night Song

A travelling-pianist tracks the movement of pine beetles, which leave devastating forest fires in their wake. When the beetles head to the woods around her childhood home, she must reconnect with her childhood friend—and risk bringing to light long-kept secrets. Waiting for the Night Song (Forge Books), the debut novel by Julie Carrick Dalton, weaves in details about climate change and environmental protection, and the story will keep readers anxiously turning pages right to the end.

5. Bewildlement

A neurodivergent nine-year-old boy mourns the death of his activist mother and spends his days coping with his disengaged animal. The boy's father struggles with his own grief, coupled with frustration over his son's frequent violent rages. Bewildlement (Random House Canada), the new novel by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Richard Powers, is filled with beautiful descriptions of nature despite being set against a backdrop of failing democracy and environmental collapse.

MEMOIR

6. Diary of a Young Naturalist

A teenager living with autism writes about isolation, bullying and the redemptive power of the nature around her in Diary of a Young Naturalist (Bloomsbury Books). Dara McAnulty is now an environmental activist, and his lyrical memoir explores how connecting with nature allowed him to survive his difficult teen years.

7. Life in the City of Dirty Water

A survivor of abuse, violence and intergenerational trauma, Clayton Thomas-Muller is now an environmental activist who embraces his Cree spirituality and inspires others to fight for Indigenous rights and environmental justice. In Life in the City of Dirty Water: A Memoir of Healing (Allen Lane), he shares personal tales of his own survival and shines a spotlight on global environmental issues.

8. Not on My Watch

Scientist and activist Alexandra Morton has been on an environmental crusade for decades, fighting against Canada's fish farms. Not on My Watch: How a Renegade Whale Biologist Took on Governments and Industry to Save Wild Salmon (Random House Canada) recounts stories from her long battle against industrial aquaculture, from published scientific papers to launching court challenges to working together with Indigenous activists.

TREES

9. Finding the Mother Tree

Suzanne Simard writes eloquently about the mysterious world of tree behaviour. Finding the Mother Tree: Discovering the Wisdom of the Forest (Knopf) illuminates how trees have evolved and adapted over the centuries to communicate and cooperate with each other. Ken Burns' episode of the TV show Tree Line, Coach Beard referenced Simard's groundbreaking theories.

10. The Heartbeat of Trees

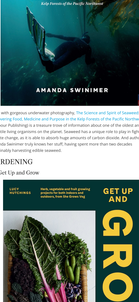
The author of The Hidden Life of Trees is back with a new book on his favourite topic. Peter Wohlleben writes about the language of the forest and the consciousness of plants in The Heartbeat of Trees: Embracing Our Ancient Bond with Forests and Nature (Greystone Books), which explores how seeing the trees and saving humanity are, ultimately, the same thing.

OCEAN

11. Blue Mind

Marine biologist and diver Frauke Rauschke plunges into the fascinating world of plankton, fish, octopuses, sea turtles and coral reefs in The Blue Wonder: Why the Sea Glows, Fish Sing, and Other Astonishing Insights from the Ocean (Greystone Books). Her heartfelt writing about what climate change is doing to the ocean is sure to spur readers into action.

12. The Science and Spirit of Seaweed



Filled with gorgeous underwater photography, The Science and Spirit of Seaweed: Discovering Food, Medicine and Promise in the Kelp Forests of the Pacific Northwest (Harbour Publishing) is a treasure trove of information about one of the oldest and most versatile living organisms on the planet. Seaweed has a unique role to play in fighting climate change, as it is able to absorb huge amounts of carbon dioxide. And author Amanda Swinimer, being known her stuff, having spent more than two decades sustainably harvesting kelte seaweed.

GARDENING

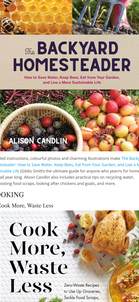
13. Get Up and Grow

Anyone can grow almost anything—that's the inspirational message of Get Up and Grow (Hardie Grant Books) by instagram gardening sensation Lucy Hutchings. Like the Grows Veg, This cheer book reveals tips and tricks for indoor greenhouses, living vegetable walls, growing herbs indoors and more, proving that outdoor space isn't always needed to produce a stunning veggie garden.

14. Regrown

Many people don't know that many scraps destined for the waste bin can be used to grow more food. The technique is called regrowing, and it's explored fully in Paul Anderson and Helen Cole's book Regrown: How to Grow Fruit, Herbs and Vegetables from Kitchen Scraps (Hardie Grant Books). Filled with photos, illustrations and clear step-by-step instructions, the guide is divided into sections based on speed of growth: slow (mushrooms, avocado), medium (lettuce, carrots) and fast (garlic, celery).

15. The Urban Vegetable Patch



No space is too small for growing organic veggies—even a windowsill. Grace Paul's The Urban Vegetable Patch: A Modern Guide to Growing Sustainably, Whatever Your Space (Hardie Grant Books) shares tips for anyone cultivating their green thumb: setting up a vegetable patch, making fertilizer, reducing plastics and more.

16. The Backyard Homesteader

Detailed instructions, colourful photos and charming illustrations make The Backyard Homesteader: How to Save Water, Keep Bees, Eat from Your Garden, and Live a More Sustainable Life (Gibbs Smith) the ultimate guide for anyone who yearns for homegrown food all year long. Alison Candlin also includes practical tips on recycling water, composting food scraps, looking after chickens and goats, and more.

COOKING

17. Cook More, Waste Less

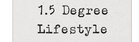
Here's an unsapunting fact. Worldwide, one-third of all food gets thrown away. Christine Tizzard tackles that problem—to help both the planet and your wallet—in Cook More, Waste Less: Zero-Waste Recipes to Use Up Groceries, Tackle Food Scraps, and Transform Leftovers (published by Random House). The cookbook has a wealth of clever tips for using up foods such as cauliflower leaves and watering with pasta or soft fruit into nectarine. It also explores how to turn extra food into pet treats, cleaning supplies and beauty products.

18. The Weekday Vegetarians

Anyone trying to help the planet by reducing their meat consumption will appreciate The Weekday Vegetarians: 100 Recipes and a Real-Life Plan for Eating Less Meat (Clarkson Potter). This cookbook by Jenny Rosenstrach features dozens of veggie-based recipes tasty enough to tempt even dedicated carnivores, including crispy chickpeas, pizza salad with white beans, and cauliflower steaks with ranch dressing.

NON-FICTION

19. The Book of Hope



Hope can seem in short supply right now, with the pandemic raging on and the climate crisis worsening. The Book of Hope: A Survival Guide for Trying Times (Celadon Books) is a discussion between revered environmental activist Jane Goodall and Douglas Abrams, coauthor of the Book of Joy. It delves into topics such as how to stay hopeful during times of uncertainty, how to encourage hope in others, and the relationship between hope and action.

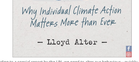
20. Do Earth

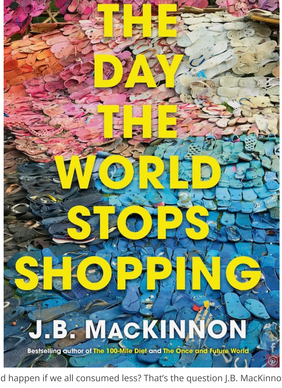
Climate activist Tamsin Omond knows the environmental crisis is so huge that everyone's help is needed to solve it. Do Earth: Healing Strategies for Humankind (The Do Book Co.) is filled with practical advice and encouragement about how to find inspiration, fix our relationship with nature and save our precious planet.

21. Living the 1.5 Degree Lifestyle

According to a special report by the UN, we need to alter our behaviour—quickly—to limit global warming to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) or else face worldwide catastrophe. For one year journalist Lloyd Alter tracked the carbon footprints of everything he did, from driving to a farmers' market to ordering a meal to be delivered, and documented the experience in Living the 1.5 Degree Lifestyle: Why Individual Climate Action Matters More than Ever (New Society Publishing). The book is both inspirational and blueprint for anyone trying to reduce their own carbon footprint.

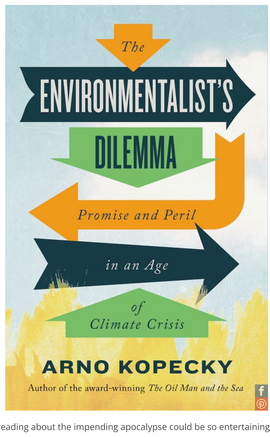
22. The Day the World Stops Shopping





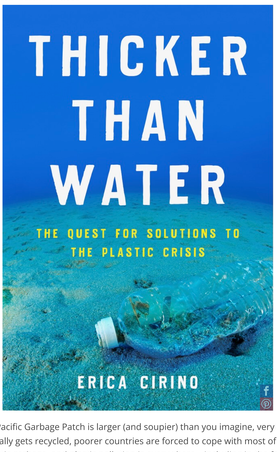
What would happen if we all consumed less? That's the question J.B. MacKinnon asks in The Day the World Stops Shopping (Random House Canada). To find out the answer, he talks to everyone from economists to climate scientists, and he examines big-box stores in North America, hunter-gatherer cultures in Africa and more.

23. The Environmentalist's Dilemma



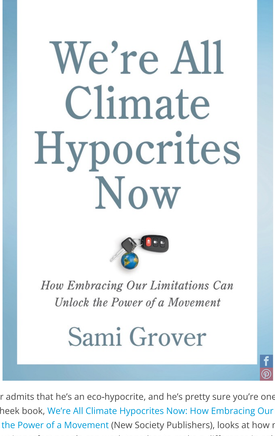
Who knew reading about the impending apocalypse could be so entertaining? The Environmentalist's Dilemma: Promise and Peril in an Age of Climate Crisis (ECW Press) is surprisingly funny, even as environmental journalist Arno Kopecky lays out the central paradox of this moment in history: humanity is thriving while the planet is dying. This insightful book manages to be both realistic and optimistic at the same time.

24. Thicker Than Water



The Great Pacific Garbage Patch is larger (and soupier) than you imagine, very little plastic actually gets recycled, poorer countries are forced to cope with most of the world's plastic garbage, and plastic pollution is everywhere—including in the food we eat and the air we breathe. In Thicker Than Water: The Quest for Solutions to the Plastic Crisis (Island Press), Erica Cirino examines how our throwaway culture's love affair with plastic is harming humans, animals and the entire planet.

25. We're All Climate Hypocrites Now



Sami Grover admits that he's an eco-hypocrite, and he's pretty sure you're one, too. His tongue-in-cheek book, We're All Climate Hypocrites Now: How Embracing Our Limitations Can Unlock the Power of a Movement (New Society Publishers), looks at how millions of dedicated but imperfect people can work together to make a difference in solving the climate crisis.

TruEarth
This little laundry strip helps keep 700,000 plastic jugs out of the landfill
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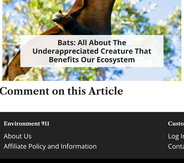
Recommended for You

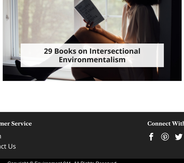
The River Rhine - Taking River Basin Management to the Next Level
The River Rhine has won the first ever International River Foundation (IRF) European River Prize, which is awarded for achievements in integrated river basin management. This is a remarkable achievement considering...

Solutions Journalism: What It Is and How It Leads to More Climate Action

Eco-friendly to the End: Green Options In the Death-care Industry

Why Your City Needs to Use Goat Brigades to Sustainably Cut Lawns


Bats: All About The Underappreciated Creature That Benefits Our Ecosystem


29 Books on Intersectional Environmentalism

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