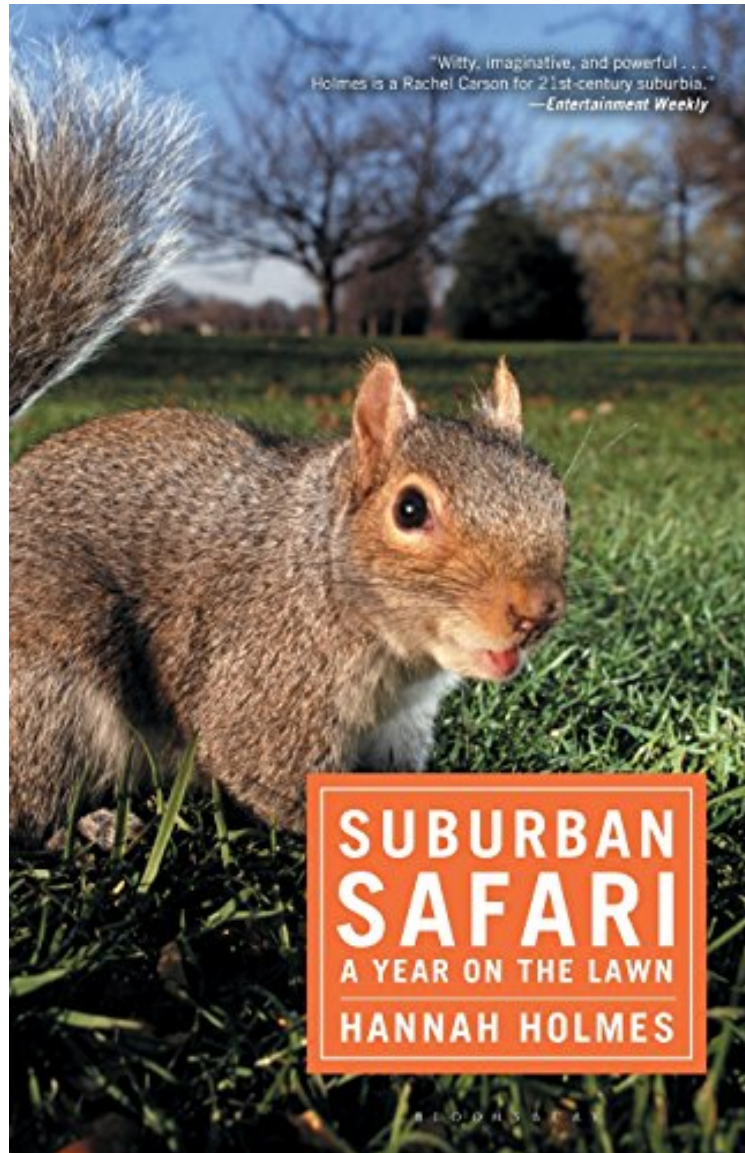


(Download free pdf) Suburban Safari: A Year on the Lawn

Suburban Safari: A Year on the Lawn

Hannah Holmes

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Hannah Holmes : Suburban Safari: A Year on the Lawn before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Suburban Safari: A Year on the Lawn:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Take A Walk On The Wild Side By Franklin the Mouse Ms. Holmes's home is probably a fifteen-or-twenty-minute drive from my house in Gorham, Maine. She lives near the ocean. I'm more inland but our habitats are likely very similar. My family lives in a neighborhood but with plenty of wildlife

between most of the homes for animals to have an unnoticed keg party. 'Suburban Safari' was published in 2005. It's a lighthearted presentation with loads of interesting information and personal insights by the author. Even when she is writing about life-and-death situations, Ms. Holmes interjects some light wordplay. The book never had me laughing out loud but her presentation is far removed from some boring academic composition. Like most people, we take for granted the familiar. The author's book reminds us that there are loads of interesting ongoing happenings just outside (hell, and inside) our door. She begins her year-long investigation during the Spring and concludes the book during Winter. The work describes various birds such as the highly intelligent crows, hummingbirds, Maine's state bird the chickadee, and the invasive species known as starlings and English sparrows. The lady certainly has an especially poor opinion of starlings and English sparrows which she explains. There's enough of a dark side to the author that she seems to relish the deaths of these two birds by other animals and isn't shy about killing mice in her basement to rid her home of them. She serves the mouse corpses to the animals, especially crows, who've come to view her place as the local neighborhood's free buffet. As the self-deprecating Ms. Holmes acknowledges, she chooses what she loves. The author names some of the crows, a hawk, some squirrels, a few spiders, and a chipmunk named Cheeky who she trains to come into her home at its leisure for food and affection. Some of the other topics Ms. Holmes covers include the various plants and trees, water, insects, the history of the lawn, various Maine mammals, the evolution of New England's topography, invasive species both plant and animal, pollution, and how humans affect their surroundings. She even taste-tests some of the greenery. Unless one of our trees starts growing bottles of French salad dressing, I'll leave the taste-testing for the female Euell Gibbons from South Portland. The author also avoids sanitizing the more brutal aspects of nature where death is a daily companion. Also, small portions of the book seem to have Ms. Holmes channeling the late Rachel Carson but not in some off-putting lecture sort of way. 'Suburban Safari' is an intimate work that has the reader becoming more aware of their immediate surroundings. It's not a bad thing, especially as society becomes evermore addicted to twenty-four-hours news stations, the Internet, and their cell phones. The book is a mixture of her personal journey of discoveries and adventures as well as many interesting facts about her little slice of nature. Now, go out there, read the book, and hug a skunk if you dare.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Hannah Holmes writes engagingly - I felt like I was having coffee with her as she chatted ...By DocI've read this book three times over the past few years and have found it to be interesting and informative in a new way each time (or maybe I'm just not a very thorough reader). Hannah Holmes writes engagingly - I felt like I was having coffee with her as she chatted about what she'd discovered. Her discoveries are well researched and honest. The book has inspired me to be more observant of my own little yard and the safaris I've taken have been most pleasurable. Thank you for giving us this delightful series of observations, Ms. Holmes.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Outstanding and EducationalBy E. HolmesA fabulous and highly informative read. Ms Holmes is a talented, clever, and entertaining writer.

The suburban lawn sprouts a crop of contradictory myths. To some, it's a green oasis; to others, it's eco-purgatory. Science writer Hannah Holmes spent a year appraising the lawn through the eyes of the squirrels, crows, worms, and spiders who think of her backyard as their own. Suburban Safari is a fascinating and often hilarious record of her discoveries: that many animals adore the suburban environment, including bears and cougars venturing in from the woods; how plants, in their struggle for dominance, communicate with their own kind and battle other species; and that ways already exist for us to grow healthier, livelier lawns. Hannah Holmes is the author of *The Secret Life of Dust*. Her science and travel writing has appeared in publications including the *New York Times Magazine*, *Outside*, *Sierra*, and the *Los Angeles Times Magazine*. She lives in South Portland, Maine. "Witty environmentalists are as rare as shy politicians. But in *Suburban Safari*, Hannah Holmes laughs at herself while celebrating the wild kingdom she explores...Holmes is a science writer who doesn't lecture. She shares the joy of discovery about the secret lives of ants, spiders and crows."-USA Today "Holmes' backyard assumes strange, oversize proportions in the course of this fascinating book: the Bamboo Wilderness, the Insect Nation, the Freedom Lawn-who needs Mongolia?"-Los Angeles Times "The writing is punchy and chock-full of strange and wonderful facts...Holmes makes it seem utterly commonplace to invite a chipmunk into one's home or spend the afternoon observing slugs."-Oregonian "Holmes sends even the most jaded urbanite out into the yard with a magnifying glass and a newly forged sense of awe...One of the most unusual, entertaining, effortlessly educational homages to nature since Euell Gibbons ate a pine tree."-Mary Roach, author of *Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers*

.com When science writer Hannah Holmes decided to spend a year studying the inhabitants of her 0.2-acre patch of ground in suburban Portland, Maine, she went about the task with an ecologist's enthusiasm and a scientist's compulsive eye for detail. The result is an entertaining and effortlessly compelling examination of nature's stubborn (and successful) struggle to exist in the face of daunting manmade challenges. Holmes's lawn, unfertilized and rarely mowed, turns out to be a surprisingly diverse ecosystem of bird, mammal, and insect life--a self-perpetuating, constantly evolving community of chipmunks, ladybugs, spiders, slugs, and crows. These creatures, and the complex relationships between them, are the raw material for Holmes's incisive reflections on natural history, urban ecology,

and the ignominious story of the over-irrigated, pesticide-laced American lawn--rolling out, Holmes notes, at a rate of one million acres per year. What drives Holmes is not just concern for the natural environment but a ravenous curiosity about every aspect of the world around her, from the sex lives of dragonflies and squirrels, to the murderous tendencies of the English sparrows that have colonized her land, to the survival strategies of the mosquitoes, sow bugs, and slugs that inhabit her yard by the hundreds. Holmes is an environmentalist to the core, but she never sermonizes. With *Suburban Safari*, an intimate, wry, and often challenging look at a world most of us never bother to notice, she ably demonstrates humanity's responsibility to a natural world that exists all around us--even in our own backyards. -- Erica C. Barnett

From *Publishers Weekly* When science and travel writer Holmes (*The Secret Life of Dust*) turned her attention to her suburban backyard, she discovered a community of wildlife desperately trying to survive in a sprawling world of "Wal-Marts and White-Crowned Sparrow Estates." Holmes manages to find signs of hope and humor amid the spread of civilization, and she reports animal activities in her yard with the fervor of *Wild Kingdom's* Marlin Perkins and the laconic glee of Garrison Keillor. "I'm a bit embarrassed to report that Cheeky has become the sun around which my world revolves," she confesses about her resident chipmunk. That small mammal is just one of the many creatures to whom Holmes gives names and personalities, but she keeps her naturalist credibility intact by inviting scientists and other experts to join her in her lawn chair vigil. With their help, she includes plenty of facts about the habits of common crows, insects, squirrels and even trees. Science and humor serve as well-managed launching points for environmental lessons. By the end of her year, Holmes has gently taught us that the American lawn is a pesticide-laden patchwork that's increasing by a million acres every year, that heating a house can produce five tons of pollutants annually and that stewardship of our own backyards is our responsibility. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From *Booklist* For readers who believe lawns are simply something needing mowing, science writer Holmes has news for them. Spending a year in her yard in South Portland, Maine, "was to learn how to administer this patch of ground in the best interest of all its citizens." Depending on the season, her two-tenths-acre empire is home to birds that lived in the ornamental shrubs, an oak tree, two pines, a chokecherry tree, and some sumacs. She records her yard as home to ladybugs (as dexterous as cats), crickets (they rarely hop, but plod along like the rest of us), and ants (they stop and tap antennae with each other). There are squirrels (one mated with five females and dropped dead), chipmunks (one lived in Holmes' house, and the book is dedicated to him), mice, skunks, woodchucks, and raccoons. All these creatures are her family, she says, "and mine to take care of, to the best of my ability." REVWR

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