

# Books

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**Biomimicry: Innovation Inspired by Nature**—Janine M. Benyus. Imagine the possibilities for solar energy if we could mimic photosynthesis. What if farms resembled self-fertilizing, pest-resistant prairies or if computers sent signals like cells? Scientists are busy exploiting the lessons Nature teaches us but that seem to be beyond our reach. Benyus reports that we are moving in on Nature as researchers master what she calls biomimicry—"the conscious emulation of life's genius." Now that electron microscopes are increasingly powerful, genetic engineering is becoming a reality, and other hurdles are falling, Benyus predicts that humankind will develop a more harmonious existence with the other creatures on Earth. Morrow, 1997, 308 p., hardcover, \$25.00.

**Charging Ahead: The Business of Renewable Energy and What It Means for America**—John J. Berger. While alternative sources of energy have not been at the forefront of our minds as energy prices have stabilized, technological advances in the areas of geothermal, solar, wind, and other power have been steady. Berger surveys these fields to show the practicability of these advances, both technologically and economically. H Holt & Co, 1997, 398 p., b&w photos, hardcover, \$30.00.

**Good Food for Bad Stomachs: The Healthy Eating Guide for Anyone Who's Ever Had an Upset Stomach**—Henry D. Janowitz. The emphasis here is on dietary changes to prevent and relieve ailments as wide-ranging as esophagitis, gall stones, ulcers, and heartburn. Chapters outlining foods beneficial to the gastrointestinal tract are followed by those that specifically address certain ailments. OUP, 1997, 224 p., hardcover, \$21.95.

**Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies**—Jared Diamond. The author attempts to answer the question posed to him by a native New Guinean who asked some 25 years ago, "Why is it that you white people developed so much cargo and brought it to New Guinea, but we black people had so little cargo of our own?" Diamond contends that Europeans and Asians benefited from better environmental conditions, which allowed them to sow crops and raise livestock, thus breaking away from their hunter-gather heritage. Mass production of crops sent these people to other places to exchange food, in the process gaining further knowledge and tools, as well as the ability to express and exchange ideas through writing. Human interaction with livestock led to animal-borne disease. These diseases killed more Native Americans than guns did when Europeans descended upon the continent. Norton, 1997, 480 p., b&w plates/illus., hardcover, \$27.50.

**In the Company of Mushrooms: A Biologist's Tale**—Elio Schaechter. Some glow. Some are multigendered. Some can be used to polish silver. Some are believed to be magical. Schaechter explores these and many other aspects of fungi as he imparts his enthusiasm for mushrooming. Besides discussing the art of mushroom collecting, the author describes the biology of fungi and their role as aids to decomposition. HUP, 1997, 280 p., color plates/b&w illus., hardcover, \$24.95.

**Shadow of a Star: The Neutrino Story of Supernova 1987A**—Alfred K. Mann. The death of a supernova and the neutrinos "carrying the news of the death of a star" are the subject of this book about the life cycle of stars. The roles of atomic, nuclear, and elementary particle physics in the action that goes on inside a star are explained as Mann deals specifically with the spectacular Supernova 1987a. Mann was a member of the team that detected and identified the associated subatomic particles—an experience he relates here. WH Freeman, 1997, 210 p., color plates, hardcover, \$22.95.

**Why People Believe Weird Things: Pseudoscience, Superstition, and Other Confusions of Our Time**—Michael Shermer. The director of the Skeptics Society tells how he plies his trade. The cultist qualities of Ayn Rand's Objectivist movement, a metadepbate with creationist Duane T. Gish on evolution, and Shermer's experience challenging the validity of a psychic on the Oprah Winfrey Show are prime examples of the author at work. The ways in which the ideas of alien abduction and denial of the Holocaust are perpetuated are also key to Shermer's skeptic job. WH Freeman, 306 p., b&w illus., hardcover, \$22.95.

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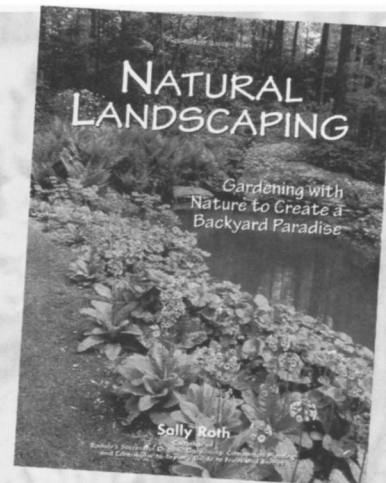
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