

Unseen City: The Majesty of Pigeons, the Discreet Charm of Snails & Other Wonders of the Urban Wilderness

By Nathanael Johnson

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It all started with Nathanael Johnson’s decision to teach his daughter the name of every tree they passed on their walk to day care in San Francisco. This project turned into a quest to discover the secrets of the neighborhood’s flora and fauna, and yielded more than names and trivia: Johnson developed a relationship with his nonhuman neighbors.

Johnson argues that learning to see the world afresh, like a child, shifts the way we think about nature: Instead of something distant and abstract, nature becomes real?all at once comical, annoying, and beautiful. This shift can add tremendous value to our lives, and it might just be the first step in saving the world.

No matter where we live?city, country, oceanside, ormountains?there are wonders that we walk past every day. *Unseen City* widens the pinhole of our perspective by allowing us to view the world from the high-altitude eyes of a turkey vulture and the distinctly low-altitude eyes of a snail. The narrative allows us to eavesdrop on the comically frenetic life of a squirrel and peer deep into the past with a ginkgo biloba tree. Each of these organisms has something unique to tell us about our neighborhoods and, chapter by chapter, *Unseen City* takes us on a journey that is part nature lesson and part love letter to the world’s urban jungles. With the right perspective, a walk to the subway can be every bit as entrancing as a walk through a national park.

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Editorial Review

Review

"[A] refreshing, thought-provoking and humorous father-and-daughter eco-quest...'Unseen City' is a modern classic of nature writing, but also a moving story about learning to be a parent." - *Associated Press*
"If every age produces its own distinct variety of nature lovers, and history seems to show it's so, then Nathanael Johnson is perfectly suited for our urban century... the book will resonate with urban homesteaders everywhere -- young professionals making a family life in the city." -*San Francisco Chronicle*

“Nature writing is full of men heading off into the wilderness in search of something, but journalist Nathanael Johnson brings the genre into the 21st century with a refreshing, thought-provoking and humorous father-and-daughter eco-quest…Johnson writes beautifully about the various city critters, and also captures the magic of a young girl growing up and viewing the world with fresh eyes and wonder…Unseen City is a modern classic of nature writing, but also a moving story about learning to be a parent.”
?Associated Press

From the Back Cover
"For days, I was reading passages from 'Unseen City' aloud and repeating my new discoveries to whoever would listen. But this is more than a trove of facts: it's a model for city living. Nathanael Johnson's curiosity is contagious--an irresistible call into the wild world waiting just steps away on the sidewalk. I loved this book." -*Robin Sloan, author of Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore*

"This delightful book reminds us it doesn't matter where you see nature; it's seeing nature that matters. A great addition to any city dweller's library." -*Eugenia Bone, food journalist and author of Mycophilia*

"A delightful romp through the lives of species we humans (without irony!) dismiss as 'invasives'--and a very funny guide to how we in fact create our cities together with creatures and plants we barely see or acknowledge. Nathanael Johnson is now officially one of my favorite storytellers." -*Jenny Price, Urban Ranger and author of Flight Maps*

"Curiosity is one of the most appealing of human qualities, and the best thing about Unseen City isn't that Johnson has it -- it's that he makes it infectious. Anyone can take a close look at snails -- or weeds or squirrels or ginkgos -- but Johnson, in smart, gentle prose, will make you wonder why you never did." -*Tamar Haspel, Washington Post columnist*

"It might seem odd at first to have a book about the wonder of nature focusing on those familiar backyard nuisances such as pigeons and snails. But as Johnson eloquently demonstrates, if we miss what is close at hand we miss something special about what it means to be alive."-*Mark Lynas, environmental activist and author of The God Species*

"The city is alive with life, crazy with biodiversity we hardly ever notice. Nathanael Johnson set out to show his daughter the wonder all around her, and here he shares that gift with you. Charming, insightful, and eye-

opening - this is a book that'll rekindle your love of nature, and have you looking at your own city with fresh eyes." *-Ramez Naam, author of The Nexus trilogy*

About the Author
Nathanael Johnson is the food editor for *Grist*. He lives in Berkeley, California.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

William Reeves:

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Randall James:

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Doris Brown:

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interesting. Your own skill of reading talent is developing when you such as reading. Try to choose basic book to make you enjoy to see it and mingle the idea about book and reading through especially. It is to be very first opinion for you to like to wide open a book and learn it. Beside that the reserve Unseen City: The Majesty of Pigeons, the Discreet Charm of Snails & Other Wonders of the Urban Wilderness can to be your brand new friend when you're sense alone and confuse using what must you're doing of the time.

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