



A Year in the Maine Woods

Bernd Heinrich

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

A Year in the Maine Woods

Bernd Heinrich

A Year in the Maine Woods Bernd Heinrich

Escapist fantasies usually involve the open road, but Bernd Heinrich's dream was to focus on the riches of one small place—a few green acres along Alder Brook just east of the Presidential Mountains. The year begins as he settles into a cabin with no running water and no electricity, built of hand-cut logs he dragged out of the woods with a team of oxen. There, alone except for his pet raven, Jack, he rediscovers the meaning of peace and quiet and harmony with nature—of days spent not filling out forms, but tracking deer, or listening to the sound of a moth's wings. Throughout this year when “the subtle matters and the spectacular distracts,” Heinrich brings us back to the drama in small things, when life is lived consciously. His story is that of a man rediscovering what it means to be alive.

A Year in the Maine Woods Details

Date : Published November 8th 1995 by Da Capo Press (first published 1994)

ISBN : 9780201489392

Author : Bernd Heinrich

Format : Paperback 272 pages

Genre : Environment, Nature, Nonfiction, Autobiography, Memoir, Science, Natural History

 [Download A Year in the Maine Woods ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online A Year in the Maine Woods ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online A Year in the Maine Woods Bernd Heinrich

From Reader Review A Year in the Maine Woods for online ebook

Dona says

Join famous marathon runner and University of Vermont professor of zoology Bernd Heinrich as he almost single-handedly builds a two-story cabin in the Maine woods, runs twenty-five miles a day in addition to hiking, charts the changing colors of autumn foliage leaf by leaf, and feeds his "pet" raven Jack roadkill treats (his truck's bumper sticker reads, "This truck stops for roadkill")--among other super human accomplishments.

I've had this book for about ten years but never read it--I was missing out. Heinrich's writing is amusing and descriptive, and his ruminations are interesting. The last two lines of the book have cultural implications: But I've come back to the hills of western Maine. These are my favorite haunts, because this is home, where the subtle matters, and the spectacular distracts.

Les Wolf says

An author with a deep appreciation and understanding of nature in all its various manifestations. Heinrich has an intimate historical and topographical knowledge of this particular patch of Maine with its impressive congregation of birds, insects, trees and mammals. He mixes science with casual observations, philosophy with notes on propagation and astronomy with logic. Heinrich is an excellent artist and includes many of his drawings throughout the book.

Cynthia says

Although I enjoyed reading this book, I would not recommend it to most people. You really have to enjoy reading about nature, particularly trees, plants, insects and birds. It's a journal style book of the year the author spends living at his cabin in the woods in western Maine. The author is an entomologist and ornithologist as well as a professor, so the nature descriptions are very detailed and somewhat scientific. You get a pretty good insight though into what it's like to live that way and how priorities and habits change. He doesn't keep himself isolated either, so the stories include other people as well. The text was informative, humorous and somewhat thought provoking...although I felt it dragged a bit at the end.

Stephen says

"I have a mailbox at the foot of the trail, and rural delivery brings the outside world that far, which is far enough. The newspaper, delivered daily to my mailbox, is a convenience I need to help start my fire in the morning. Not wanting to waste anything, I sometimes even read it," writes Heinrich.

Yes. A year in the Maine woods. A favorite theme of mine: guy goes off into the woods, cuts down some trees and builds a cabin reminiscent of Thoreau and Burroughs. Then said guy spends a year observing his neighbors: the plants and animals that live around him. But no one does it quite like Heinrich, a trained biologist, entomologist, ornithologist, professor of zoology. To be a scientist is to be curious. He not only explores the countryside, he investigates its tiniest secrets. Caterpillars, mayflies, glowworms, burying

beetles. All have their little bug-hearted ways of getting along in this world.

Heinrich is interested in the small things, in a place where “the subtle matters and the spectacular distracts.” And distracts. And distracts. And distracts. And pretty soon an entire year has past.

Beth Maddaus says

Last night I finished *A Year in the Maine Woods* by Bernd Heinrich. The author, who is a professor at the University of Vermont, took a sabbatical to live in his cabin in the Maine woods for a year and explore all that was around him through the seasons.

When my oldest son was about four years old, curious about everything and on my last nerve, I would send him outside with a pail and tell him to come back when he had filled it. By the time he had his pail full, I would have had a cup of tea, have put the younger kids down for a nap and be ready to explore his bucket with him. There were always great natural treasures in his bucket--snake skins, ectoskeletons, flowers, egg shells, unusual leaves and sometimes something alive. We had a 24-hour observation period on the live specimens, although I remember one time we could not identify the creature and ended up keeping it an extra day so that we could take it to the local University and have a biology professor take a look at it with us--we got some strange looks that day but finally found one willing to indulge a four year old and his mom.

A Year in the Maine Woods is like spending a year exploring what was in the pail. Bernd makes discoveries everywhere and they are fascinating to read about. He details the cocoon of a moth that he found in a viburnum bush near the brook by describing the imprint of the moth on the pupal skin left behind. He eats grubs and ants in the fall and the spring to test whether or not they are sweet with the antifreeze glycerol. He brings a group of students to research and live in his cabin for a few weeks--he teaches them to observe and discover with every step they take and as a reward whips up a meal of fried mice for them. One of my favorite observations is of a red squirrel in the late winter running from sugar maple to sugar maple, making bite marks into the branches and then returning days later to eat the maple sugar left behind after the sap had run from the wounds and evaporated.

In one of my favorite chapters, Bernd sets out for a run on a logging road. As he jogs down the road, he sees a moose lumbering toward him and he quickly climbs a maple tree. He observes the moose for a while as it casually travels toward the tree and then stops beneath it. As Bernd heads back to his cabin he decides to stop in at his closest neighbors' home to tell them about the moose.

"That called for a beer or two, and a supper of fresh corn, while sitting around the fire outside. Ron said, 'I wonder what the rich folks are doing tonight.'"

The area in which the book takes place is within about 15 miles of where I live, making it all the more enjoyable. The Farmington Diner where Bernd often retreats for coffee, eggs and companionship is about to be torn down to make way for a Rite-Aid.

Mt. Bald which he mentions several times has been recently logged over but still stands proudly over Wilson Lake.

It's impossible to read Bernd Heinrich without falling in love with golden-crowned kinglets and ravens. I have yet to find a kinglet, although I am constantly vigilant when in the spruce-fir forests in the winter. But the ravens are everywhere and whenever I see a pair or a group of juveniles, soaring and diving and perching I think about Goliath and White Feather and Jack and wonder if I am watching the descendants of one that I

met through the pages of a book.

The book ends with this wonderful paragraph.

"Like the indigo bunting and the phoebe that live here, I've traveled widely. I've lived in California, Africa, New Guinea, South America, and the High Arctic. But I've come back to the hills of western Maine. These are my favorite haunts, because this is home, where the subtle matters, and the spectacular distract."

Kathy says

The author, a naturalist and scientist, shares his experiences of living in his cabin in the woods for a year. Those who enjoy the many colorful and curious details in nature will, like me, find this a quick, delightful and engrossing read. The author also includes lovely sketches of flora and fauna he observes. There will be flies (so many you will be astounded) and a clever way of disposing of them, a pet Raven, sauteed mice, bread baking, tree climbing, seed counting, leaf color analysis, methods of forestry pondered, ice fishing, squirrel behaviors, walks in the bog, a phone in the outhouse, and many more anecdotes as well as solid science in this lovely little book.

Divya says

I took a while to finish this book because it is one of those books that hover around your house, reading a little bit now here by the living room and then again after a few days by the bedroom window, because it's structured so and I think it's enjoyable this way. I've read another book by Bernd Heinrich before, 'The Snoring Bird', a far more intense account of his family's escape from WWII so cleverly interspersed with natural history notes and nature's early influence in his life. This book is pleasantly mild, a collection of simple, beautiful observations through the seasons of a year, of the dynamics of nature and human life spent alone in a cabin in the woods, crafting neat little experiments to engage the curious mind, a glimpse into his thoughts, emotions, and principles of life, so many of which I share as I continue to learn and evolve. It is light for those who want to read something harmless after a long day, it is engaging for those who want to skulk around the house on an off-day, and it is filled with small adventures and learning for those who are interested in a story. I think this is one for my eventual bookshelf of the future, to pick up and read a page every time I walk by it.

Katharine says

Heinrich gives us a good look at life without modern amenities in central Maine. His descriptions of creatures and the interactions they have on a life cycle stage is fantastic and worthy of the parts where his blindness to his own solitary state makes you want to shake him.

He pines for a family after two ruined marriages. He should read Alice Miller, Drama of the Gifted Child to keep from repeating his mistakes.

All that human drama on the side, the creatures, ravens and insects are exciting indeed.

Jake says

I found this book at one of those 'Giant Book Sale' things that always seem to pop up in the same place after a Circuit City or Staples shuts down. It was 68 cents.

With no preamble, ol' Bernd Heinrich tells you he's driving to his cabin in the woods with his newly trained pet raven. And when he gets there he counts and catalogs every bird, bug, tree, weed, sound and fluffy cloud pattern. He casually drops lines like 'On this morning's 30-mile run, I saw blank and blank and blank.'

Now, I ask you. You accidentally find a book written by a dude who decides to move his shit to the woods for the year with only a wild bird and a weird appetite for supermarathons and caterpillar counting. Don't you read this book from cover to cover? Yes. Yes sir, you do.

Turns out that Bernd is a famous scientist and a sorta famous distance runner and has written a ton of sciency books. Never heard of the guy, and he certainly doesn't toot a horn. Does a pretty good Thoreau impression without being hoity-toity about it.

Janie says

I love this book. I only read this at night before sleep and sometimes in the morning if I awakened too early, so usually only manage less than fifty pages, but I savor most every sentence. Heinrich is so nature-appreciative. So I'm really looking forward to his other books.

Quotes to remember:

"To walk in the woods and not recognize the songs [of the birds] is to not hear them. To not think of the birds' uniquely beautiful and artfully concealed nests is to have the woods seem empty. Most of us are like sleepwalkers here, because we notice so little."

"This abundance of secretions attracts even more blackflies, and they descent as soon as I shur off the saw and pick up the ax for limbing. But I don't begrudge them; they are part of the bargain. *It is these tiny critters that help keep Maine green, by keeping people out.*" (Emphasis mine!)

"Every time I build a fire to heat up a cup of coffee, it represents precious time that I have had to invest."

"Today I did a 30-mile run, painfully, but at the end I discovered the absolute tip-top of pleasure. The tip-top of pleasure is sitting down at your desk in front of a window with a view toward Mount Bald, with a cup of hot coffee beside you and nothing to do but think or ruminare and scribble with your pen in a notebook."

"On the grass this morning, there was unmistakable white hoar frost. Yet I had to touch it with my fingers to become convinced."

"The ravens play individually, in pairs, or in samll groups; they circle high, dive, fold their wings, and shoot up or down with one or several of their fellows. They chase and frolic, tarry, turn loops; they make croaks, high cries, and rattling sounds. They do anything but fly in formation. They remind you of a bunch of schoolboys wandering down a lonely road, kicking a ball along. The geese fly mechanically, calling unvaryingly and beating their wings at a steady disciplined rhythm like soldiers marching off."

"But, above all, [trees] can *make* forest and wilderness, at the same time that they are making energy."

"Until now the hard discipline to follow through has rousted me outdoors on sub-zero days even before daylight. Now I need some other focus to give meaning to every day. Life is not a spectator sport."

"I have no words with which to conjure up in your mind the lilting, lispng song of a black-throated blue warbler, nor with which to give you even a taste of the vibrant, energetic refrain of a winter wren. These sounds come from another world that must be experienced to be felt. There is a limitation of vicarious experience, which reminds me of why I came to these woods in the first place."

"Around a bend, a pair of wood ducks makes squeaking calls and rises with splashing and then whistling wings. You do not see the male's brilliant garb of red, purple, green, and blue. But you know you are hearing *the jewels of the marsh*." (Emphasis mine.)

Chrissie says

This is a good book, but for the right person. It will not fit everybody.

The author, a naturalist and teacher, spends one year in his cabin in Maine. It is a log cabin that scarcely stays warm. He cuts down trees and chops his lumber. He has no running water. No refrigerator. He is divorced, but his kids do not live with him, although his son of nine does visit. He comes to the cabin to refind himself, to slow down and also to raise and continue his studies of ravens. This author has written several other books. I preferred both *The Snoring Bird: My Family's Journey Through a Century of Biology* and *Winter World: The Ingenuity of Animal Survival*.

This naturalist is continually puzzling out how our world works. On every walk, with every thought, with every action, on every viewing of the world around him he poses questions about nature. Then he figures out how to find the answer. He measures growth of trees, he watches red squirrels and discovers how they make syrup, he studies animals and bugs and plants and the formation of the earth. Everything of nature interests him. He opens his eyes and sees the moon and then he explains for example why the moon has the same appearance (i.e. the same amount and shape visible) for all who can view it. He measures the minutes more of sunlight he has every day. The world is a big laboratory for him. In this book he puzzles out and explains in detail how all parts of his world in the woods works during the summer, fall, winter and finally spring.

I believe the more knowledgeable you are about different species of fauna and flora, the more you will get out of this book. When he mentions that he came across a particular insect, it helps to know which insect he is talking about. I didn't always. Sometimes I could not follow his detailed explanations. Sometimes I would have preferred just a sentence about the beauty of that around him. He did think the fall leaves in all their different hues were magnificent, but he immediately started analyzing why some trees have only one fall color while others have several. He did look at the world around him and compare it to how people behave. Are we the same? Are we different? What can we learn from this phenomenon?

There were many beautiful line drawings of twigs and buds, of plants and animals.

To conclude I would have preferred a little less science and more about ravens. He loves ravens. When he talks about them, you know where his heart is. When his baby raven leaves, when he grows up and flies away, it breaks my heart (not his). I would have preferred more about his relationship with Jack, the raven. I didn't want that to end. But of course it had to, and it happens early in the book!

Elizabeth says

This book is slow and deliberate, just like the undertaking of living off grid in the Maine woods for an extended period of time. It offers patient observations of wildlife in the woods and a delightful meditation on the seasons and changes of the woods. If you are into nature journals, you will find this book both easy to read and a pleasure to travel through.

Nancy says

I loved this book and almost gave it 5 stars. The author spends a year in his cabin in the Maine woods, no electricity or running water. He observes everything around his cabin--birds, bugs, frogs, weather, people, stars and planets. His respect for and his admiration and knowledge of nature was deeply moving to me, and he is passing all that on to his children and the students he teaches/taught (he was a professor at the University of Vermont--i think he's retired now). I wish there were more people like him.

Matt Mattus says

Each of us will find a book that changes our life, or at the very least, one which stays with us for a lifetime. This book is one of less than five books in my life, that truly and deeply, stays with me. It's one of those books that I pull out of my library often to re read, perhaps 6 or 7 times now, often randomly selecting chapters based on what season I am in.

Mind the Book says

En fredag i november nådde jag fram till denna skylt, efter en pirrig pilgrimspromenad från Concord till Walden Pond, där Thoreau genomförde sitt filosofiska frihetsprojekt:

Den då nyskilde professorn Bernd Heinrichs skildring av ett år i en timmerstuga i Maine är förvisso thoreauporrig, men det finns ett problem i följande:

"I went into the woods without looking for anything in particular, and without any predetermined goal."

Först på sidan 231 av 258 kommer detta klagörande. Då har man sida upp och sida ner tagit del av allehanda skalbaggsorter, flugor, fåglar, mossor och bladformationer. Heinrich är dock alldeles för brutalt karnivor för att det ska bli en njutbar läsupplevelse.

Däremot är det trevligt att följa observationer under fyra årstider i Maine: ljusgröna ekar, skuttande rådjur, smarta korpar, den legendariskt newenglandiska höstlövsprakten samt den hårda vintern när man måste knuffa upp dörren hårt p.g.a. snödrivor och gå ut i skogen och knacka hål på isen som täcker vattenkällan.

