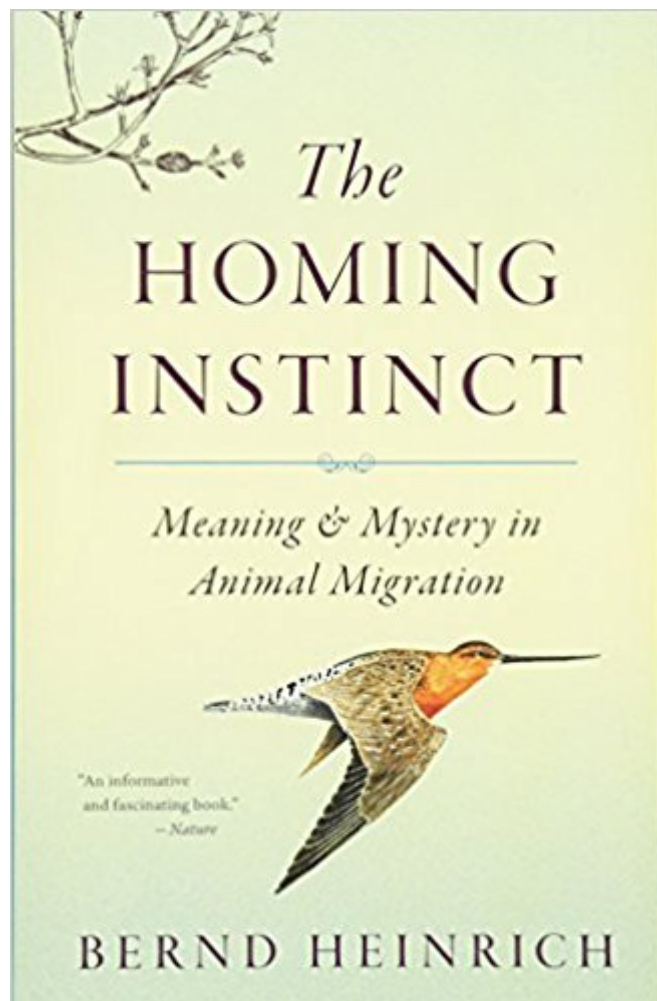




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# The Homing Instinct: Meaning And Mystery In Animal Migration



## Synopsis

“A noted naturalist explores the centrality of home in the lives of humans and other animals . . . A special treat for readers of natural history.” • Kirkus Reviews “Every year, many species make the journey from one place to another, following the same paths and ending up in the same places. Every year since boyhood, the acclaimed scientist and author Bernd Heinrich has done the same, returning to a beloved patch of western Maine woods. Which led him to wonder: what is the biology in humans of this primal pull toward a particular place, and how is it related to animal homing? In *The Homing Instinct*, Heinrich explores the fascinating mysteries of animal migration: how geese imprint true visual landscape memory; how scent trails are used by many creatures to locate their homes with pinpoint accuracy; and how even the tiniest of songbirds are equipped for solar and magnetic orienteering over vast distances. And he reminds us that to discount our human emotions toward home is to ignore biology itself. “A graceful blend of science and memoir . . . [Heinrich’s] ability to linger and simply be there for the moment when, for instance, an elderly spider descends from a silken strand to take the insect he offers her is the heart of his appeal.” • Julie Zickefoose, *Wall Street Journal* “Deep and insightful writing.” • David Gessner, *Washington Post*

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Naturalist Heinrich (*Life Everlasting*, 2012) returns with another richly crafted title that immerses readers in the wild world. In this outing he focuses on the mysteries of migration and the homing

instinct while also delving into the personal story of his own Maine home. From such expected migrators as birds and butterflies to moths, eels, and grasshoppers, Heinrich's elegant passages (with line drawings) wander in and out of discussions on long travels, dwelling construction (bees are primary players), and "home crashers," which include bed bugs and other pests. His trademark wit and self-deprecating humor are evident throughout, especially in a delightful chapter highlighting the intricate web building and preservation of a spider he rightfully dubs Charlotte. The many small illustrations of easily overlooked creatures combine to bring a story of life into focus. Whether in Alaska for the annual return of a pair of sandhill cranes or researching the lives of his land's previous owners, Heinrich doesn't lose sight of his goal to understand why creatures great and small all long for a return to home. --Colleen Mondor --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A captivating exploration of the homing instinct in animals, and what it means for human happiness and survival Acclaimed scientist and author Bernd Heinrich has returned every year since boyhood to a beloved patch of western Maine woods. What is the biology in humans of this deep-in-the-bones pull toward a particular place, and how is it related to animal homing? Heinrich explores the fascinating science chipping away at the mysteries of animal migration: how geese imprint true visual landscape memory; how scent trails are used by many creatures, from fish to insects to amphibians, to pinpoint their home if they are displaced from it; and how the tiniest of songbirds are equipped for solar and magnetic orienteering over vast distances. Most movingly, Heinrich chronicles the spring return of a pair of sandhill cranes to their home pond in the Alaska tundra. With his trademark marvelous, mind-altering prose (Los Angeles Times), he portrays the unmistakable signs of deep emotion in the newly arrived birds and reminds us that to discount our own emotions toward home is to ignore biology itself. " --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I was disappointed by the Homing Instinct. Bernd Heinrich is one of the great naturalist science writers of our time and many of his books are classics such as the Snoring Bird telling his amazing family story or Mind of the Raven. As short stories, the Homing Instinct has many interesting and enlightening sections but the book never comes together as a whole. I found the sections on spiders and his hunting tedious and taking away from the great promise of his earlier chapters. His musings on societies and "home" and fire did not bear up to the high standards of other books he has written and I had to force myself to finish the book.

It's too bad! I just finished reading this marvelous book about homing pigeons. It has many facets. I learned a lot without trying while enjoying every page. My kind of science, humane with an ecological vision not hard to understand. I now know why the passenger pigeon is extinct, the real reason. The smell of the real America wafts out of those pages. It is science and it is understanding, love of the land, animals, insects...Every time I pick a book by Bernd Heinrich when I finish reading it. I say This is his best! This time believe me. This one is fantastic. If you have read his other books you get as a bonus little bits of stories, anecdotes you are familiar with from his other books. I felt like an insider that knows certain things other have no idea what it is all about. I wish I could write like that!

I enjoy all of Mr. Heinrich's books and they are always a fascinating and educational trip through the wonders of the natural world. "The Homing Instinct" is no exception. In it, the author discusses not only the quest for "home" through migration, but also what "home" exactly means to different species and even to us humans. There are numerous descriptions of animals and their homes, from Sociable Weaver birds and their apartment complexes in the African desert, the amazing migratory activities of Monarch butterflies and Bar-Tailed Godwits, the practices of finding and keeping a home as described in bees and a number of different bird species, and Mr. Heinrich even explains in a fascinating chapter his theories as to how the extinction of the Passenger Pigeon and other species are very integrated into their "homing" activities. The latter portion of the book takes a more personal tone as the author writes of his concept of home and sense of place (the chapter titled "On Home Ground" almost made me want to become a deer hunter, it is so lovingly written) and also about our sense of place and connections to "home" in this increasingly technological age. Overall, a wonderfully written and fascinating book, as I find all writings of this amazing naturalist are. Highly recommended.

Dr. Heinrich has written numerous books on nature, science and the philosophical outlook of those who love our outdoor world. In this well written book are rich personal anecdotes, chapters on the science of animal homing, and descriptions of nature and woodcraft from the Maine woods. I have not read a single book by this author that has failed to fascinate and to make me a touch envious of his physical prowess in climbing trees (which is physically demanding and very dangerous). My father and I did just enough of it when I was young to give me insight into what's involved in climbing to a hawk's nest 15 meters from the ground. I thank the author for sharing his gifts with us.

Not for everyone. That said, if you're fascinated by Nature, animal and human behaviors, and you enjoy memoirs, this is a satisfying, quality read--one you'll want to reread. Feels like a textbook in the beginning chapters, then opens into an interesting and often humorous memoir. I bought this book because of its recent review in the Wall Street Journal, AND because I had built a home in another state for part-time living and was curious about my own homing instincts (if I had any). This is an educational read overall, but his personal touches scattered throughout help a reader form a bond with the author. His bee hive outside his campus office and the experiments he conducted with the spider in his Maine cabin (among his other anecdotes), lead me to believe the author must fit my impression of a typical university professor: a genius, eccentric, with unquenchable curiosity and a dry sense of humor. I wish I'd had him as my instructor when I was at UCB.

Bernd Heinrich has an amazing ability to bring you with him on wonderful explorations with the skilled observations of a scientist, an intoxicating curiosity that broadens the experience enough so that we each can find our own connection to it, a belonging even. It's an intricate, mystic skill he has to follow the hard science straight into a deeper understanding of nature itself and our own. How does the world work and how do I find my own way accordingly? What are the wild adaptations according to species and climate and evolution and why, and what are the possibilities of my own relationship to all of that? Those are the invitations of his work for me at least. He asks the best questions. It is so fun and beautifully written. And instructive in the most relevant way. He remains one of my very favorite writers ever.

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