

The Canadian Field-Naturalist

Book Reviews

Book Review Editor's Note: *The Canadian Field Naturalist* is a peer-reviewed scientific journal publishing papers on ecology, behaviour, taxonomy, conservation, and other topics relevant to Canadian natural history. In line with this mandate, we review books with a Canadian connection, including those on any species (native or non-native) that inhabits Canada, as well as books covering topics of global relevance, including climate change, biodiversity, species extinction, habitat loss, evolution, and field research experiences.

Currency Codes: CAD Canadian Dollars, USD United States Dollars, EUR Euros, AUD Australian Dollars, GBP British Pounds.

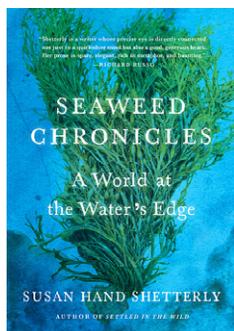
BOTANY

Seaweed Chronicles

By Susan Hand Shetterly. 2018. Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill. 271 pages, 27.59 CAD, Cloth.

Seaweed Chronicles is a blend of engaging popular science and interview-based narrative. It is highly place-based—the Gulf of Maine and surrounding area is the main geographic focus—but the nature of the subject matter means that connections are made between ocean coasts of all kinds. Shetterly has been involved in the regulatory and research communities for decades, and although her knowledge of the subject matter is apparent and the book is clearly well researched, this is not a treatise on the biology of seaweed. Several species of seaweed and the creatures that depend on them are highlighted and sufficient background is provided to inform the uninitiated, but this is primarily a book of stories, lives lived in a relationship with algae.

Each chapter focusses on one or a few related subjects, typically presented from the experience of a topic specialist via direct quotes and background information. The writing is usually conversational in tone and covers integrated topics such as the cod fishery collapse, island sheep farming, potato gardening, invasive species, and eider ducks. I started reading this book while living in landlocked Ontario, but after living on the East Coast for a month, I found it significantly more engrossing. That is not to say that those without a coastal context will not enjoy *Seaweed Chronicles*, but I suspect having at least



casual contact with the ocean will only improve the reading experience. Shetterly does provide a short primer in the front matter on the algal species that feature prominently, but it would benefit from a measure of visual context—if you don't know the species in question, it may help to start your reading with a quick Internet image search. While the author does refer to specific facts and findings, the book itself does not contain references.

What *Seaweed Chronicles* does exceptionally well is tell the stories of individual people. Perspectives represented include those of researchers, farmers, harvesters, policymakers, and conservationists, and their lived experiences are the foundation of the book's content and structure. In this relatively short work, Shetterly delves into more dimensions of seaweed than you ever knew existed—as habitat, foodstuffs, artisanal martini decoration, animal forage, restoration tool, fertilizer, and so on. Some stories will probably grip you more than others depending on your personal context, but the writing is accessible and there is almost certainly something within that will pique your interest. For those with a coastal upbringing or fond place-based memories, *Seaweed Chronicles* provides an enjoyable stroll along the water with a good teacher to reveal new layers of understanding. For those less familiar, it offers a window into a macroalgae world that is foundational to the health of our oceans. Either way, it is worth the read.

HEATHER A. CRAY
Halifax, NS, Canada