

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.

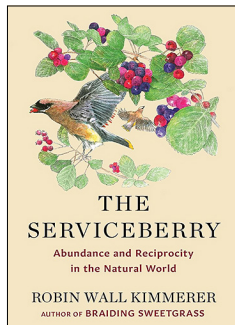
BOTANY

The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World

By Robin Wall Kimmerer. Illustrations by John Burgoyne. 2024. Scribner. 128 pages, 25.00 CAD, Hardcover, 13.99 CAD, E-book. Also available as an Audiobook.

This is the eagerly anticipated third book by the author of *Braiding Sweetgrass* (Milkweed Editions, 2015) and *Gathering Moss* (Oregon State University Press, 2003). It is a treatise on reciprocal gift economies from the perspective of the author and an invitation to explore a mindset of gratitude and abundance instead of scarcity and competition. Serviceberries (*Amelanchier* spp.; other common names include shadbush, Saskatoon berry, juneberry, shadblow, sugarplum, and sarvis) serve as connecting threads in this exploration of how the current market economy contrasts with the reciprocal exchange evident in ecosystems. As a serviceberry tree distributes its wealth of berries to meet the needs of its natural community and in so doing ensures its own survival, a reciprocal gift economy provides wealth and security through the quality of its relationships. Expanding on some of the themes in *Braiding Sweetgrass*, this work more directly critiques the ills of capitalism and resource accumulation and advocates for “a kind of biomimicry to design systems of exchange which benefit human people and non-human people at the same time” (p. 73).

At 109 pages of body text and only 12.7 cm × 17.8 cm in size, with a relatively large font and widely spaced lines, this is a small book. You could finish



reading it cover to cover, with some time to ponder, within a few rainy-day hours. In terms of aesthetics, nothing about this book is stark; for the hardcover version, the overall effect of the design choices is one of warmth, with deckle edges and an off-white linen finish and beautiful colour illustrations on the cover. Thematic black and white line illustrations also pepper the text and are lovely additions.

Kimmerer touches on various topics, including Little Free Libraries, YouTube tutorials, repair cafés, ecological economics, and rethinking Garrett Hardin's (1968) article in *Science*, “The Tragedy of the Commons”. This book is a good jumping-off point for further reading and reflection. Key authors and theorists are mentioned in the text, making it easy to follow up on ideas or research areas that spark your interest. Those looking for the plant or essay-centred storytelling of the author's previous works will not find it here; instead, *The Serviceberry* is a call for reciprocity, community, gratitude, and acts of care both large and small. This little book would make an excellent gift, and when you are done reading it, pass it on to a friend.

Literature Cited

Hardin, G. 1968. The tragedy of the commons: the population problem has no technical solution; it requires a fundamental extension in morality. *Science* 162: 1243–1248. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.162.3859.1243>

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