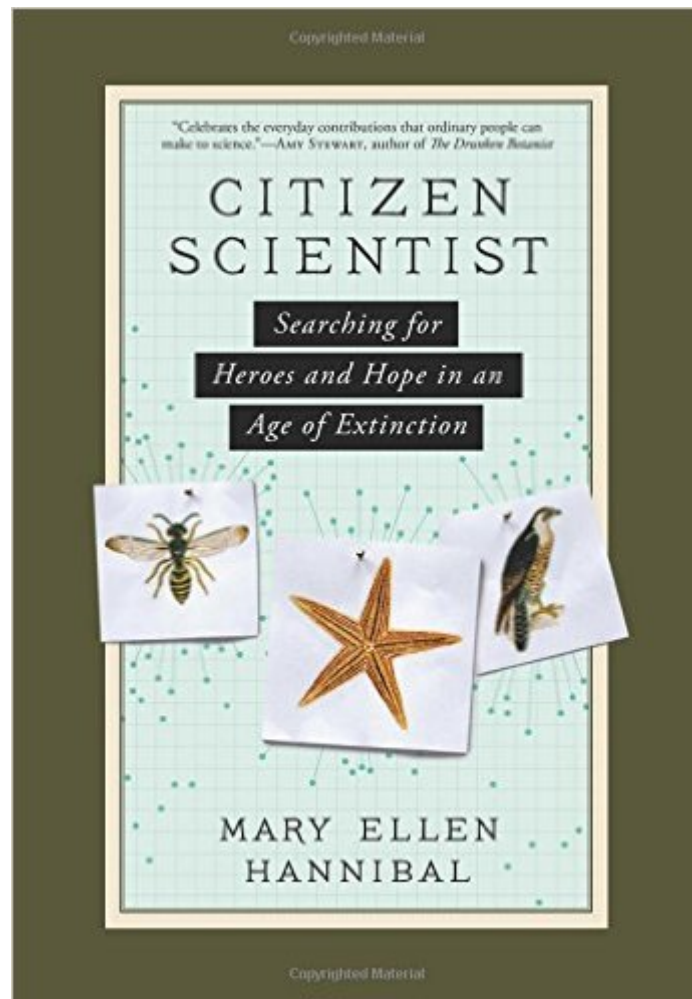


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Citizen Scientist: Searching For Heroes And Hope In An Age Of Extinction



Synopsis

In the vein of *H Is for Hawk* and the work of Rebecca Solnit and Elizabeth Kolbert, a masterful consideration of the profound, urgent necessity to bear witness to life and loss. Here is a wide-ranging adventure in becoming a citizen scientist by an award-winning writer and environmental thought leader. As Mary Ellen Hannibal wades into tide pools, follows hawks, and scours mountains to collect data on threatened species, she discovers the power of a heroic cast of volunteers and the makings of what may be our last, best hope in slowing an unprecedented mass extinction. Digging deeply, Hannibal traces today's tech-enabled citizen science movement to its roots: the centuries-long tradition of amateur observation by writers and naturalists. Prompted by her novelist father's sudden death, she also examines her own past and discovers a family legacy of looking closely at the world. With unbending zeal for protecting the planet, she then turns her gaze to the wealth of species left to fight for. Combining original reporting, meticulous research, and memoir in impassioned prose, *Citizen Scientist* is a literary event, a blueprint for action, and the story of how one woman rescued herself from an odyssey of loss with a new kind of science.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

At the beginning, I was expecting an account of the personal experience of doing citizen science and understanding its place in the world - much like Sharman Apt Russell *Diary of a Citizen Scientist* (a wonderful book which I highly recommend! *Diary of a Citizen Scientist: Chasing Tiger*

Beetles and Other New Ways of Engaging the World). However Citizen Scientist is a very different type of book, with a much richer internal 'ecology.' The book is weaving five themes - the impact of the mass extinction that we are experiencing around us; a very personal account of losing a parent; the history and development of ecological knowledge of coastal California; Joseph Campbell's literary framework of the 'hero's journey,' and the way it can be linked to John Steinbeck and Ed Ricketts' work around Monterey; and the current practice of citizen science, especially around the Bay Area and coastal California. These themes are complex on their own, and Mary Ellen is doing a great job in exploring each one of them and bringing them into interaction with each other. As I went through the book, each of these was explained clearly from a well researched position, with the experiential aspects of citizen science - including the frustration and challenges - beautifully expressed. As you read through the book, you start to see how these themes come together. It must be said that most of these themes are worrying or raise the notion of loss. Against this background, citizen science plays the role of 'hope' at the corner of Pandora's box - offering a way to connect to nature, nurture it and redevelop a sense of stewardship. A way to preserve the cultural practices of the Amah Mutsun tribe, nature, and a sense of connection to place.

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