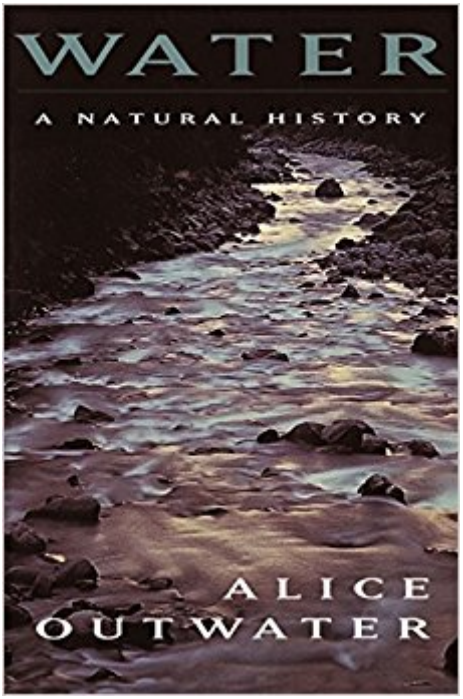
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Water: A Natural History



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Synopsis

An environmental engineer turned ecology writer relates the history of our waterways and her own growing understanding of why our waterways continue to be polluted—and what needs to be done to save this essential natural resourse.Water: A Natural History takes us back to the diaries of the first Western explorers; it moves from the reservoir to the modern toliet, from the grasslands of the Midwest to the Everglades of Florida, throught the guts of a wastewater treatment plant and out to the waterways again. It shows how human-engineered dams, canals and farms replaces nature's beaver dams, prairie dog tunnels, and buffalo wallows. Step by step, Outwater makes clear what should have always been obvious: while engineering can depollute water, only ecologically interacting systems can create healthy waterways.Important reading for students of environmental studies, the heart of this history is a vision of our land and waterways as they once were, and a plan that can restore them to their former glory: a land of living streams, public lands with hundreds of millions of beaver-built wetlands, prairie dog towns that increase the amount of rainfall that percolates to the groundwater, and forests that feed their fallen trees to the sea.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

What happens when you flush your toilet? Environmental engineer and writer Alice Outwater knows, and she guides the reader through the technical ins and outs of such delicate matters as water treatment and sewage handling--subjects she writes about with considerable charm. Here you will learn how "raw sludge brew" is separated, how methane from sewage is converted to a source of

power, and how aqueducts past and present really work. Outwater also describes in lay terms the complex ecology of rivers, making a strong case for the preservation of free-flowing streams in the place of dammed waterways. Her book is somewhat more narrowly focused than the title suggests, but it is highly interesting and instructive nonetheless. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A generation after the Clean Water Act was passed, one third of our waters are still polluted, according to the author, and only 6% of contamination is caused by industry. Environmental engineer Outwater, who managed scum and sludge removal in the Boston Harbor cleanup, reaches back into our history to chart the changes in our waters. Once, a tenth of the total land area was beaver-built wetland; the beaver’s decline caused the first major shift in the nation’s water cycle. The depressions buffalo made on the ground and the holes dug by prairie dogs collected rain and runoff that seeped down to the water table; our waterways have been transformed by the loss of these keystone species. Outwater looks at grasslands and forests, artificial waterways, agriculture, aqueducts and toilet bowls, sewers and sludge (she gives a guided tour of a waste-treatment plant). She makes a strong case for restoring natural systems to public lands?repopulating beaver, bison and prairie dogs. This book is a valuable addition to environmental literature and to our understanding of water. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I’m an old man; but, I’ve learned so much from this book. I’ve learned how the use of the waters, lands, forests, and air have been tremendously changed by the actions of all the people who came to the New World (including the "USA") from the years 1500 until today. There were extensive forests with many trees 4 to 5 feet in diameter, and 100 to 200 feet in height; tens of millions of buffalos; and clean, pure lakes and streams. The author, Alice Outwater, places no judgments; but, tells of the actions, and lack of actions, taken to manage, modify (for ill, or good), and clean up our environment. I only wish she would produce a follow-up, or an updated edition (The copyright on the book is 1996. Today, is the year 2014.)

This is a fascinating book. I was a biology/ecology major and am now retired, and I was amazed how much I learned from this book. I had no idea about the impact the beavers (and prairie dogs) had on our overall eco-system, and how much the landscape and water tables have changed since our expansion into the west and the decimation of the beavers, and the prairie dogs when the

buffalo went.....

What a beautiful book! Education and information wrapped in history that reads like a mystery novel. The tales of beavers and riparian zones, buffalo and prairie are emotionally haunting while teaching about the importance of caring for our rivers. Through it all, there is hope -- hope that readers will see the world with more compassion and act with passion to restore the watersheds in which we live by understanding the natural history of freshwater. So compelling that I read it in two days.

I had to read this book over the summer for my AP Environmental Science class. I was expecting a dull, but informational book: somewhat like a school book. It wasn't, however. This book is by far one of my favorite books. You don't realize how enlightening the book is. You get pulled in, and you can't stop reading. After you finish reading, you want more, and you realize how much you learned about our resource if water. I loved it. Simply amazing.

An amazing book that explains water from the basic history to treatment in the modern day! I have given this book as a gift to many and used it in my Hydrology classroom and it has been loved by all!

Absolutely a great read for those who are conscious of nature and the impact water has on it. In addition, you will discover animals that also affected water and it's flow and how man has changed the positive impact these animals have or had on nature.It is understood mankind had to use some of nature as a resource to survive. This book reveals how water flow was before and after man touched it in North America.Beautifully written and a breathe of fresh air.

Cleverly written and a real eye opener to the water around us.

The only reason anyone would give this book a bad review is if they are scientifically illiterate and environmentally apathetic... This is one of those rare books that condenses difficult and dismaying information into a concise and poetic experience that is only describable as enlightening. It is dense, but if you are not looking to learn anything I might suggest a less dense book. Maybe a high school vampire diary.

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