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Tracks and Shadows: Field Biology as Art

Harry W. Greene

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Intellectually rich, intensely personal, and beautifully written, *Tracks and Shadows* is both an absorbing autobiography of a celebrated field biologist and a celebration of beauty in nature. Harry W. Greene, award-winning author of *Snakes: The Evolution of Mystery in Nature*, delves into the poetry of field biology, showing how nature eases our existential quandaries. More than a memoir, the book is about the wonder of snakes, the beauty of studying and understanding natural history, and the importance of sharing the love of nature with humanity.

Greene begins with his youthful curiosity about the natural world and moves to his stints as a mortician's assistant, ambulance driver, and army medic. In detailing his academic career, he describes how his work led him to believe that nature’s most profound lessons lurk in hard-won details. He discusses the nuts and bolts of field research and teaching, contrasts the emotional impact of hot dry habitats with hot wet ones, imparts the basics of snake biology, and introduces the great explorers Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace. He reflects on friendship and happiness, tackles notions like anthropomorphism and wilderness, and argues that organisms remain the core of biology, science plays key roles in conservation, and natural history offers an enlightened form of contentment.

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