

Summer Reading Roundup

Summer is upon us, and with it comes the possibility of relaxing with a good book. Here are some ideas for books that may entertain or educate you during a summer vacation, whether that vacation be a weeks-long trip to a distant part of the globe or some armchair traveling done in the comfort of home.

Yosemite: Art of an American Icon. (Edited by Amy Scott. Los Angeles: Autry National Center, in association with Berkeley: University of California Press; 2006. 221 pages. ISBN 0-520-24922-4.)

Does your ideal summer vacation include visiting a magnificent national park? Viewing a thoughtfully curated art exhibit? Browsing through a masterfully produced volume? Even if it doesn't, you may appreciate and enjoy this book. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same title (which recently appeared in Los Angeles and soon will move to Oakland, California; Reno, Nevada; and then Indianapolis, Indiana), this book features an abundantly illustrated set of essays addressing not only the depiction of Yosemite in painting and photography but the American Indian art of the Yosemite region. Included are many images by classic depictees of Yosemite, such as painter Albert Bierstadt and photographer Ansel Adams, and by contemporary artists and others; works from 2005 and even 2006 appear. A section presenting brief biographies of nearly 90 artists enhances the book. Readers who are at all acquainted with the costs of producing such a lavish volume will not be surprised to see several donors acknowledged for helping to enable its publication. Even if you cannot venture far beyond your coffee table this summer, you can literally and figuratively enjoy wonderful vistas through this book. — *Barbara Gastel*

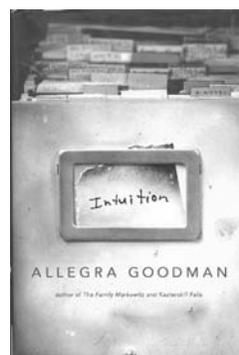
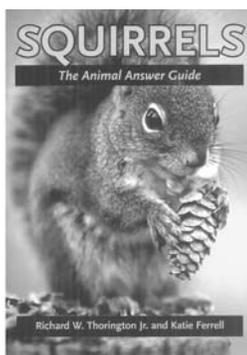
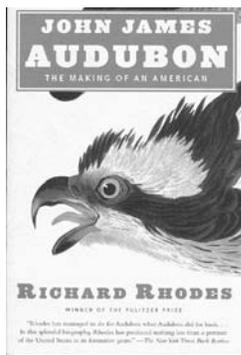
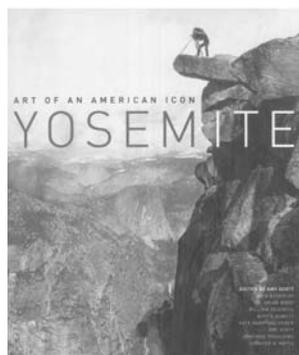
John James Audubon: The Making of an American. (Richard Rhodes. New York: Vintage Books; 2006. x + 514 pages. ISBN 0-375-71393-X.)

John James Audubon's businessman and family-man sides have been somewhat obscured by his fame as a naturalist over the last 2 centuries. Richard Rhodes presents all those aspects in this rich portrayal of Audubon's life. Born in 1785 in what is now Haiti, Audubon spent his life observing nature, running businesses, and traveling throughout the United States and parts of Europe as he supported his family, including Lucy, his wife of 43 years, from whom he was physically separated for long stretches. The nature-observation practices of Audubon's time are interesting to the modern reader; in those days, the best way to get something to stand still in a life-like position long enough to draw it was to kill and pose it. In Audubon's later life, the reader learns, he became increasingly cognizant of the environmental effects of the sporting and collecting habits of that era. Rhodes's depiction of the relatively young United States in which Audubon lived and worked is also fascinating. Audubon's adult life began around the time Lewis and Clark completed their Voyage of Discovery, and Audubon continued their spirit of exploration and learning throughout his life. — *Edith Paal*

Squirrels: The Animal Answer Guide. (Richard W Thorington Jr and Katie E Ferrell. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press; 2006. 183 pages. ISBN 0-8018-8403-9.)

Whether you're vacationing in the wilds, taking a workday lunch break outdoors, or looking out into your backyard, the delights of summer can include watching squirrels. Such observation can be made still more enjoyable and much more informative by this engaging book. Written by a curator of mammals at the National Museum of Natural History of the Smithsonian Institution and his former research assistant, who has worked as

continued



a journalist, the book begins with chapters on biologic aspects of squirrels, such as coat color, ecology, reproduction, and feeding. It includes chapters on squirrels as they relate to people—for example, “Squirrel Problems (from a human viewpoint)”, “Human Problems (from a squirrel’s viewpoint)”, and “Squirrels in Stories and Literature”. The information is presented readably and sometimes wittily as the answers to more than 80 questions, ranging from “How many kinds of squirrels are there?” and “Can squirrels see color?” and “How long do squirrels live?” to “What do squirrels have to do with the Cinderella story?” The many photographs enliven and instruct, and an eight-page list of squirrel species and a 13-page bibliography round out the book. Highly recommended for summer browsing! — BG

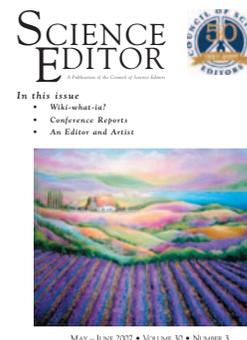
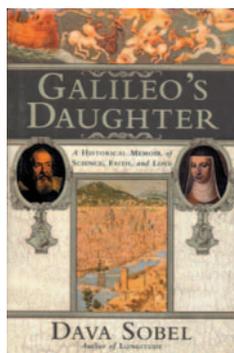
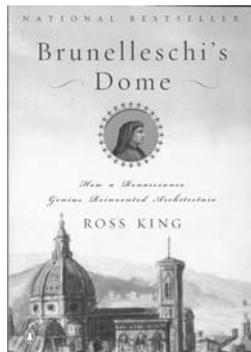
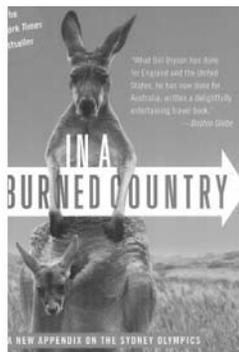
Intuition. (Allegra Goodman. New York: The Dial Press; 2006. 344 pages. ISBN 0-385-33612-8.)

Allegra Goodman brings the personalities found in the research laboratory to life in her novel *Intuition*. A young postdoc makes what looks like a breakthrough in his research. An experimental cancer treatment he has been working on with few results suddenly seems to work—dramatically. But a colleague who happens to be the postdoc’s girlfriend questions the veracity of the data and takes her suspicions to higher authorities, including outside federal reviewers. Goodman’s depiction of the various personalities in the laboratory will ring true to everyone who has ever worked in or dealt with an academic research

laboratory—the codirectors, one convivial and publicity-seeking, the other quiet and exacting; the postdocs with their mix of personalities and quirks; the staffers toiling quietly behind the scenes who possess far more wisdom than is first apparent—so true, in fact, that some readers who work in academic research and publishing may find that this work reminds them too much of their workaday worlds to want to read it during their off hours. However, they may find comfort in the sense of *schadenfreude* gained from reading about someone else’s travails for a change. — EP

State of Fear. (Michael Crichton. New York: Avon Books; 2005. 672 pages. ISBN 0-06-101573-3.)

Think *The Monkey Wrench Gang* updated for the 21st century. Now the ecoterrorists have gone global, and it’s not always easy to tell which are the good guys. In *State of Fear*, author Michael Crichton takes on the issues of environmentalism and global warming. His fictional environmental group goes to extremes to spread its views about the hazards of global warming, potentially at the cost of many human lives. Dissenters, on the other hand, try to publicize little-known data that muddle the global-warming picture between bouts of trying to keep the environmentalists from wreaking havoc. Despite the serious tone of some of the content (the bibliography is 31 pages long, and a Crichton-authored essay titled “Why Politicized Science Is Dangerous” is included as an appendix), this book qualifies as good beach or airplane reading, with



colorful characters, exotic locales (Paris, Antarctica, and South Pacific islands among them), and plentiful edge-of-your-seat action. The paperback format is easy to tote as well. — EP

In a Sunburned Country. (Bill Bryson. New York: Broadway Books; 2000. ISBN 0-7679-0386-2.)

Sweltering in the Northern Hemisphere this summer? Dreaming of vacationing in a land where the seasons are reversed? Lacking, though, the time or money (or frequent-flyer miles) to do so? Then find a cool spot and enjoy this travelogue by popular author Bill Bryson. With a gift for analogy and an eye for detail, Bryson recounts in this volume his meanderings in Australia. In doing so, he integrates history, geography, biology, sociology, anthropology, politics—and, among other things, sizable doses of humor. Although sometimes a bit rambling, Bryson's yarns go well with a tall beverage on a lazy summer day. Editors may especially enjoy Bryson's passage about his days sitting next to a “recruit from Down Under” (later a prominent Australian newspaper editor) on the copy desk at the *Times* in London. And an advantage of reading the book over visiting Australia in person: One avoids the hazardous creatures of which, with a mix of horror and gruesome glee, Bryson repeatedly writes. — BG

Brunelleschi's Dome: How a Renaissance Genius Reinvented Architecture. (Ross King. New

York: Penguin Books; 2001. 194 pages. ISBN 0-14-200015-9.)

The dome of Florence's Santa Maria del Fiore is so striking that it seems almost magically inspired. Given the architectural knowledge of the 1400s, the period during which it was built, its creation did indeed require stretching the boundaries of what was thought possible at the time. In *Brunelleschi's Dome*, author Ross King describes the improbable development and construction of the dome against the rich backdrop of 15th-century Italy. For starters, the dome's designer was neither a carpenter nor a mason; Filippo Brunelleschi was a goldsmith and clockmaker. In addition to the technical challenge of creating the world's largest dome, Brunelleschi had to contend with professional rivals, labor issues, and the ever-looming possibilities of plagues and wars that threatened to halt construction. King also describes the innovative techniques used to build the dome. *Brunelleschi's Dome* is a wonderful description of working life in the Italy of nearly 600 years ago. This book would be a delightful primer for a trip to Italy and a worthwhile substitute for those whose travels won't take them to that part of the world this summer. — EP

Galileo's Daughter: A Historical Memoir of Science, Faith, and Love. (Dava Sobel. New York: Walker and Company; 1999. 420 pages. ISBN 0-8027-1343-2.)

Three children were born of Galileo Galilei's illicit relationship with Marina Gamba. Fortunately for those of us born

centuries later, the eldest, Virginia, carried on an extensive written correspondence with her father. *Galileo's Daughter*, by Dava Sobel, is a portrait of their relationship, of Galileo's work, and of the upheaval his ideas caused in the orthodoxy of the day. Because Virginia was thought unmarriageable, owing to the unmarried status of her parents, she entered a convent at the age of 13. As a nun, she adopted the name Maria Celeste in homage to her father's passion for the stars. Her concern for him, her support of his work, and her requests for whatever aid he could provide are evident in her letters to him. The reader wonders what Galileo wrote to his daughter of his trials and of his daily life as a scientist. His letters to her, unfortunately, have not been found, and this lends credence to the account that they were destroyed by the mother abbess of Virginia's convent. — EP

Great Canadian Cookies, Bars and Squares. (Compiled by Sheila Peacock and Jennifer Abrams. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre; 2002. 112 pages. ISBN 1-55054-961-8.)

Bookstore browsing during a Canadian visit last summer, I encountered this fine collection, derived from a contest in which CBC Radio One in British Columbia "asked listeners for their all-time favourite cookie recipes and the stories behind them." Both the recipes and the accompanying stories are indeed winners. Thanks presumably to deft editing, the stories are conversational but crisp. The recipes, which were tested before publication, are easy to follow and generally straightforward to execute; unlike those in some other cookie books, few require obscure ingredients, equipment, or techniques. Conveniently for summer cooks, the book includes quite a few recipes for bars or squares—less likely

than regular cookies to heat up the kitchen excessively and easier to pack for a picnic or other excursion. Readers who enjoyed the British Columbia specialty Nanaimo Bars while in Vancouver for CSE meetings may appreciate finding a highly praised recipe for them in the chapter "Chocolate Cookies, Bars and Squares". — BG

Science Editor. (Periodical of the Council of Science Editors. ISSN 1535-5365.)

Of course, recipients of *Science Editor* normally read it from cover to cover within hours after its arrival. On the slight chance, though, that occasional untoward circumstances prevented some readers from doing so, we recommend catching up during quiet times in the summer. Conveniently trim, *Science Editor* can be easily read on a plane, on a train, or at the beach. (Please restrain yourself, though, from doing so while driving.) And anywhere the Internet can be accessed, CSE members can read *Science Editor*, at www.CouncilScienceEditors.org. You can browse through issues online, access compilations of pieces on given topics or from given parts of the publication, or search the index for articles on subjects of interest.

And while you have *Science Editor* in mind, please send us a paragraph about a book that you found to be great summer reading. As editors, we are already thinking about next summer's reading roundup. You can reach us at edith_paal@yahoo.com and b-gastel@tamu.edu. — BG

EDITH PAAL works in human-subjects research oversight at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. BARBARA GASTEL is a faculty member at Texas A&M University and the editor of *Science Editor*.