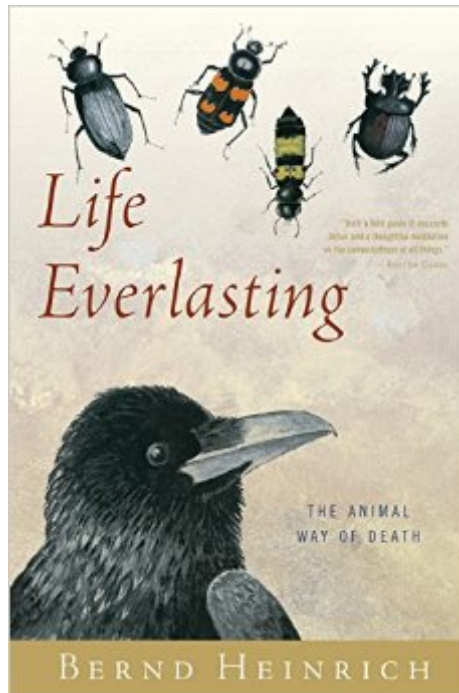


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Life Everlasting: The Animal Way Of Death



Synopsis

“Bernd Heinrich is one of the finest naturalists of our time. *Life Everlasting* shines with the authenticity and originality that are unique to a life devoted to natural history in the field.” —Edward O. Wilson, author of *The Future of Life* and *The Social Conquest of Earth* How does the animal world deal with death? And what ecological and spiritual lessons can we learn from examining this? Bernd Heinrich has long been fascinated by these questions, and when a good friend with a terminal illness asked if he might have his “green burial” at Heinrich’s hunting camp in Maine, it inspired the acclaimed biologist and author to investigate. *Life Everlasting* is the fruit of those investigations, illuminating what happens to animals great and small after death. From beetles to bald eagles, ravens to wolves, Heinrich reveals the fascinating and mostly hidden post-death world that occurs around us constantly, while examining the ancient and important role we too play as scavengers, connecting death to life. “Despite focusing on death and decay, *Life Everlasting* is far from morbid; instead, it is life-affirming . . . convincing the reader that physical demise is not an end to life, but an opportunity for renewal.” —Nature “A worldwide tour of the role of death in nature that is consistently fascinating and fun to read.” —Seattle Times

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Customer Reviews

Within just a few pages of *Life Everlasting*, it’s clear that Bernd Heinrich is a man with a very different perspective on death. A consummate biologist, Heinrich thinks nothing of putting out animals in various stages of decomposition, and waiting around to see what scavengers turn up and

how they behave. And throughout the book's many different experiments and subjects (mice, deer, elephants, whales, trees), the results are unwaveringly fascinating, even illuminating. There's just one caveat: you might need a strong stomach to get through all of it. Or not. I'm a squeamish vegetarian, and I loved this book. It turns the tables on our usual perception of death as about endings and personal grief and looks at bigger picture. Death not only makes room for life, but also sustains and enables it. From burying beetles that locate, bury, and raise their young in carrion to fungi that recycle dead trees into food and shelter for many organisms, *Life Everlasting* is not about dust to dust, but rather life to life. Although short at just under 200 pages, *Life Everlasting* has a broad scope and introduces lay readers to many biological wonders, from the behavior of ravens to the composition of chalk and the curious life cycle of salmon. Not all the chapters are equally interesting to me, but all of them are enjoyable to read and clearly written. There's a substantial list of recommended reading at the back (including one of my favorite previous Vine books, *The Mystery of Metamorphosis: A Scientific Detective Story*), but Heinrich never becomes pedantic with either scientific terms or academic footnotes.

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