

Fiction

Thursday Murder Club by Richard Osman (Mystery Fiction)

This story is a very enjoyable witty romp with residents of a senior living center who decide to use their own methods to solve a local murder. Along the way you learn many back stories and motivations of why people act the way they do - both of the residents - the official detectives - and the possible murderers. Great entertainment! The author has a new book coming out soon.

Reviewed by Judy Danielson

Lilac Girls and Lost Roses by Martha Hall Kelly (Historical Fiction)

I just finished reading THE LILAC GIRLS & LOST ROSES by Martha Hall Kelly. Both excellent. In LILAC GIRLS, Martha Hall Kelly has woven together the stories of three women during WWII that reveal the bravery, cowardice and cruelty of those days. LOST ROSES is not only a brilliant historical tale, but a love song to all the ways friendships carry us through the worst of times. Both novels were based on historical events. Parts of the book were difficult to read but there was so much sweet along with the bitter and sad, that both books were very uplifting. I did not want either book to end. Both are at the Cary.

Reviewed by Jill Howes

The Guide by Peter Heller (Fiction)

This gripping tale combines the majesty of nature and the peace of fly fishing with the cruelty of humanity. Another great Heller read.

Reviewed by Steve Dodge

The Night Watchman by Louise Erdrich (Fiction)

This Pulitzer Prize winning book takes place in 1953 and it is about several Chippewa families in North Dakota. One story is modeled after Louise's own grandfather who fights (through a letter writing campaign) a U.S. Senator who has presented a bill to terminate all Indian rights. Another story line follows a young woman trying to support her family and find her sister who has disappeared in the city. The writing is masterful and the characters very compelling. I found I learned a lot and understood more clearly what motivated individuals. Highly recommended.

Reviewed by Judy Danielson

Landslide by Susan Conley (Maine Fiction)

This book is aimed directly at any mother who stumbles through parenting "wolves", AKA teenage sons. She doesn't while living on an island, intermittent power, caring for an injured fisherman husband, and trying to explain gig employment to the local bank loan officer. Go Jill. Anyone who's driven on Route 9 out the Airline will appreciate this story.

Reviewed by MaryJean Cowing

Nothing More Dangerous by Allen Eskens (Fiction)

This racial prejudice story takes place 50 years ago but could be today's news. Black and white take on a southern town's prejudice. Everyone should read this book and ponder.

Reviewed by Steve Dodge

Circling the Sun by Paula McLain (Historical Fiction)

This book is historical fiction about the life of Beryl Markham, the first woman to cross the Atlantic by plane from London to New York. Her early life growing up on a horse farm in Africa led to a woman of strength and complexity.

Reviewed by Lucy DiRenzo

The Coldest Case: A Bruno Chief of Police Novel (Mystery)

This latest installment in this excellent series is a winner. Set in the Perigord region of France (think Cave paintings) all the usual characters entertain as always. Bruno is trying to see if facial reconstruction technology can help solve a cold case but that doesn't keep him from whipping up amazing meals using the abundance of his garden, the countryside's delicacies, the vineyards etc. What's not to like? As usual village affairs are tied into larger crime and political issues, so there is always a chance that the lovely Parisian secret agent will turn up once again. As if this fabulous part of the scenic French countryside isn't enough, Balzac becomes a father--there are Basset puppies!

By all means start with book 1 if you haven't read these.

Reviewed by Janet Adelberg

The Lowering Days by Gregory Brown (Maine Fiction)

Downeast Maine, the Penobscot Nation, loves, hates, lobstermen and fights, combine to make this a must read book if you are a Mainer or a wannabe! Read if you love nature or lakes and oceans or life!

Reviewed by Steve Dodge

Non-Fiction

Mayflower by Nathaniel Philbrick (History)

Remember what you learned about the Pilgrims and the first American Thanksgiving at Plymouth? Time to start over, and learn again! This outstanding history by Nathaniel Philbrick may amaze you, and will surely expand your understanding of the European immigrants and the indigenous tribes of New England. I had no idea of the numbers of Native communities and their cultures, and how differently the various European and Native groups interacted with each other — in peace, in trade, and in war. Important indigenous and immigrant leaders are profiled in the course of Philbrick's tale.

Reviewed by Joyce Weaver Johnson

The Code Breaker: Jennifer Doudna, Gene Editing, and the Future of the Human Race by Walter Isaacson

This 481 page book will challenge and entertain you and perhaps even stimulate your brain with its fascinating story about Jennifer Doudna, her colleagues, their research (genes, DNA, RNA, enzymes, proteins, etc) and the discovery of CRISPR (clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats). You will read about other researchers' work some of which came years before Doudna's including discovery in 1953 of the Double Helix and some which happened concurrently. You can get some insight into researchers, their experiments and the curiosity which drives them. You can read about the competition, the desire to be the first to discover and acknowledged, the rivalries, the lawsuits and the collaborations! Other things of interest: who does the experiments, how they are done, who receives the credit in published scientific articles, how science and business combine. At the heart of the story always is CRISPR, its use in developing tests for the coronavirus and its uses as a tool to edit DNA. How will it be used in the future? How should it be used? I can't claim that I understood everything I read, but Isaacson has done a stellar job of writing about these complicated things in a way that can be understood.

Reviewed by Cynthia Pelliccia

Finding the Mother Tree by Suzanne Simard

Fascinating account of serious, groundbreaking forestry research in British Columbia — which has a lot in common with Maine. (How about Western White Pine, cousin to Eastern White Pine, kin to one of Maine's most familiar and important species?)

Her story begins with a remarkable childhood experience: She watched for many hours as her father and uncle excavated deep beside the outhouse, finally succeeding in rescuing the family dog "Jiggs" which had somehow fallen down the hole. This, Simard tells us, is when she began to learn and to be curious about the importance of the various layers of soil, down to bedrock.

Simard's field work, laboratory research and teaching at universities in B.C. and Oregon have focused on discovering and understanding the subsurface interactions of the root systems of commercially important tree species such as Douglas Fir (as well as other woody and green plants) with subsurface fungi. The fungi are critical to communication between the roots of other trees. The research has had a big effect on thinking about issues including clear cutting, single-species planting, and the use of herbicides and other tools.

I enjoyed "**Finding the Mother Tree**" all the way through!

Reviewed by Joyce Weaver Johnson

Owls of the Eastern Ice: A Quest to Find and Save the World's Largest Owls

By Jonathan C. Slaght (Non-Fiction)

In "Owls of the Eastern Ice, A Quest to Find and Save the World's Largest Owls", Jonathan C. Slaght invites us to join him in a remote forested area of coastal Russia bordering the Sea of Japan for an important scientific study of the world's largest owls. Prior to Jon and his Russian collaborators undertaking this study, very little was known about the elusive Blakiston's fish owl. Over a five-year period, which included twenty months in the inaccessible forest primarily in winter, these professional and citizen scientists were successful in gathering information which has since been utilized to protect these incredible birds and their endangered habitats.

Jon writes in detail regarding the birds, their environment, the ups and downs of scientific research and his memorable companions with humor and honesty, and in the end provides a fascinating picture of the real-life struggles undertaken by these dedicated individuals who are doing such critical work.

I found myself eager to share this journey with them and highly recommend this book to readers who enjoy the amazing details of our natural world and the chronicle of people of different cultures coming together to work collectively for the betterment of our planet.

Reviewed by Kellie Hess

In the Heart of the Sea, the Tragedy of the Whaleship Essex by Nathaniel Philbrick (History)

Nantucket writer and sailor Nathaniel Philbrick deeply researched this calamity of 1820, when New England sailing ships out of Nantucket were important in the international industry of harvesting whales for their oil. The Essex came to grief half a world away in the South Pacific, when an apparently outraged whale rammed and sank the ship. The struggle of crew members to survive and to make their way home is epic. (Few succeeded.) Philbrick's writing is terrific, and he has exhaustively researched the industry, its varied participants, and its role in the life and economy of the island.

Reviewed by Joyce Weaver Johnson

