

The Barking Tree Frog and Other Curious Tales



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出版者:

出版时间:2009-8

装帧:

isbn:9780813928418

Here's something that doesn't happen every millennium: Roughly 35 million years ago, a stray meteorite dropped out of the sky over Virginia and left an impact that helped shape one of the continent's most distinctive coastlines. This scene of cataclysmic violence now lies beneath the calm waters of Chesapeake Bay. The occurrence of this prehistoric event only recently came to light, and the consequences of that impact will stretch far past our lifetimes. As Diane Casto Tennant makes clear in her new book, it wasn't the last interesting thing to happen in these parts. Selected from Tennant's widely admired writing for the "Norfolk Virginian-Pilot," these stories reveal the rich natural history Virginia had compiled long before the first human set eyes on it--as well as the fascinating phenomena that still surround us. Her search for stories takes the author from dinosaur footprints along the Rappahannock to the best-preserved insect fossils on earth. On the way, she encounters a cast of characters that includes shark fishermen, math geniuses, wolf callers, and a birder with extraordinary eyesight. She speaks with a man who can read the minds of horses and introduces us to a very special Jamestown skeleton that could help solve a 400-year-old mystery. Tennant also explores those other inhabitants of the mid-Atlantic, looking to animals for miraculous stories of survival and adaptation. We witness the difficult life of Sea Turtle No. 62, whose journey illustrates the hazards confronting its species. We consider what it

means to be the fastest dog in the world. We join a quest to find a barking tree frog and glimpse the strange afterlife of beached whales. While the author doesn't avoid the hard in the hard sciences, these stories speak primarily to the wonder of science. For the common reader, whose stores of scientific knowledge may not be vast but whose curiosity is, the perfect guide has just arrived.

作者介绍:

目录:

[The Barking Tree Frog and Other Curious Tales_ 下载链接1](#)

标签

评论

[The Barking Tree Frog and Other Curious Tales_ 下载链接1](#)

书评

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