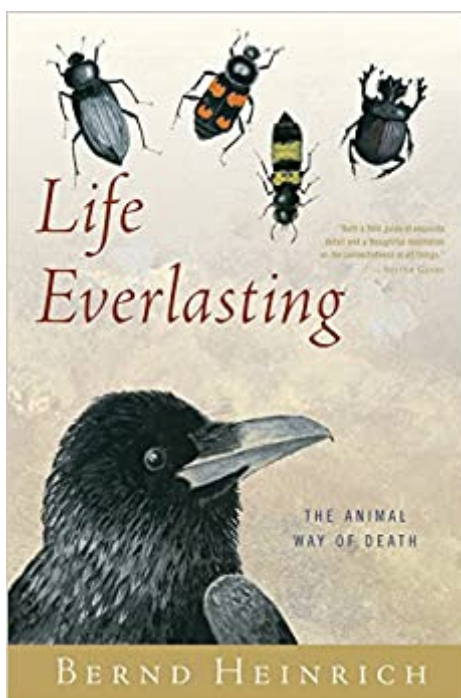


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# Life Everlasting: The Animal Way Of Death



## 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

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" [AU PHOTO] BERND HEINRICH is an acclaimed scientist and the author of numerous award-winning books, including the best-selling *The Mind of the Raven*, *Why We Run*, and *Winter World*. He is a frequent contributor to national media, and professor emeritus of biology at the University of Vermont. "

BERND HEINRICH is an acclaimed scientist and the author of numerous books, including the best-selling *Winter World*, *Mind of the Raven*, *Why We Run*, *The Homing Instinct*, and *One Wild Bird at a Time*. Among Heinrich's many honors is the 2013 PEN New England Award in nonfiction for *Life Everlasting*. He resides in Maine.

You say you've never thought about which critters feed on other critters when they die? Perhaps not surprising, but maybe you should. It turns out to be a fascinating subject and one that's explained as clearly and pleasantly as possible by the author, who is an ornithologist, biologist or some other kind of -ologist. An animal lover friend of mine who keeps a virtual zoo on his California estate routinely practices "sky burial" when one of his animals dies, a term neither he nor I had heard of prior to running across this book. It amounts to leaving the departed on the side of a hill somewhere. A few weeks later, little remains but the bones. The creature has been reunited with the earth, ecosystem, cosmos or whatever you choose to call it. This is not a mushy, New Agey piece of romantic puffle. It's a scientific look at a process that's as old as anything on earth and a very entertaining and informative one. Highly recommend it.

For those of us with endless curiosity and persistence, Bernd Heinrich always offers, without striving, a fresh and original way of looking at the world. He roots his biology in the growing

revelation of connectedness among all living things, and in this book, uses vultures, dung beetles, sawdust, and hummingbird moths, among many other things, to show that our world, chemically speaking, depends upon the reuse and transformation of once-living tissue in order to survive. Nothing is wasted, nothing is lost, and in this process, our planet has survived and evolved over millennia. Read this book and, true, you'll never again look on death in quite the same way. But more interestingly, you'll never again look on life in the same way either. Take insect metamorphosis - that transformation of various (but as Heinrich points out, by no means all) insect families. Many of us, having learned long ago about these "stages" of development, may be tempted to say, "Ho-hum, caterpillar to butterfly again." But no. Here is something new. And along the way to deeper understanding of this familiar biological process, Heinrich reminds us of ancient myths of human metamorphosis, which we so easily tend to dismiss as superstition. Suddenly these antiquated attempts at unraveling a mystery show themselves as metaphors, hints at a world we are just now beginning to explore. How brilliant of biologists and chemists to look beneath the surface, to wonder just how pupa turns into imago! It seems that the best of humans have always had a kind of Ariadne thread to the truth, and over the eons, learned to observe well and not to be afraid when they didn't understand what they were seeing. This is as good an answer to anti-evolutionist arguments as I can think of: Just because we, as individuals, do not understand something, does not mean that we, alone and together, cannot and someday will not understand. We may never unravel life entirely, but the journey for each of us, however long or short it lasts, will be unutterably rewarding. Start with Heinrich. And as a bonus, one of the best gifts of this book is a full, rich bibliography, so we can go on exploring.

For decades discussions --perhaps arguments--have persisted between various religious sects and scientists as how death occurs and what evolves, or fails to, after death. Bernd Heinrich, a retired biology professor, proffers a view that this is an unnecessary argument. As the pattern of one life form ceases to exist, its material becomes the source for new life forms to appear. And all of these are necessary forms for the continuation of Earth's planetary existence .

You are a model citizen who recycle, compost the kitchen non-animal residue, hunts for a place to recycle plastic shopping bags, signs petitions to protect endangered species... You thought falsely that you really did all the good you could do for the planet and it's denizens. Of course you did good but there is more to do, much more. Here comes the hard part, maybe the most important part because it involved some of the most cherished set of belief's humans are infected with: religion and

clean and neat which is about similar non-sense. Nature is not clean and neat. Someone even described it to have bloody teeth if I remember correctly. Here comes environmental Preacher Bernd Heinrich with his sermon: Life Everlasting. It is not from thousands of year when people knew less than today's first graders about the environment. This comes from today's latest scientific knowledge. Please read Bernd Heinrich latest, Life Everlasting. The one that moved me the most of his books, the one I learned the most from. I just found out that I wasn't alone in my, some would call, way out there thinking. You can do it, it's only 200 pages long and learn stuff about the environment no one told you about.

I found this book to be very interesting. It's about how things in the natural world return to nature after death. It covers how animals die in the forest, in the ocean and how plants breakdown and return to nature. This was my first leap into natural science in a long time and I really enjoyed it. I found the book to be just scientific enough that I was learning a ton of information yet it was tailored enough to the general public that I wasn't lost on concepts that are over my head. It made me want to take a class with the author as I just ate this book up!

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