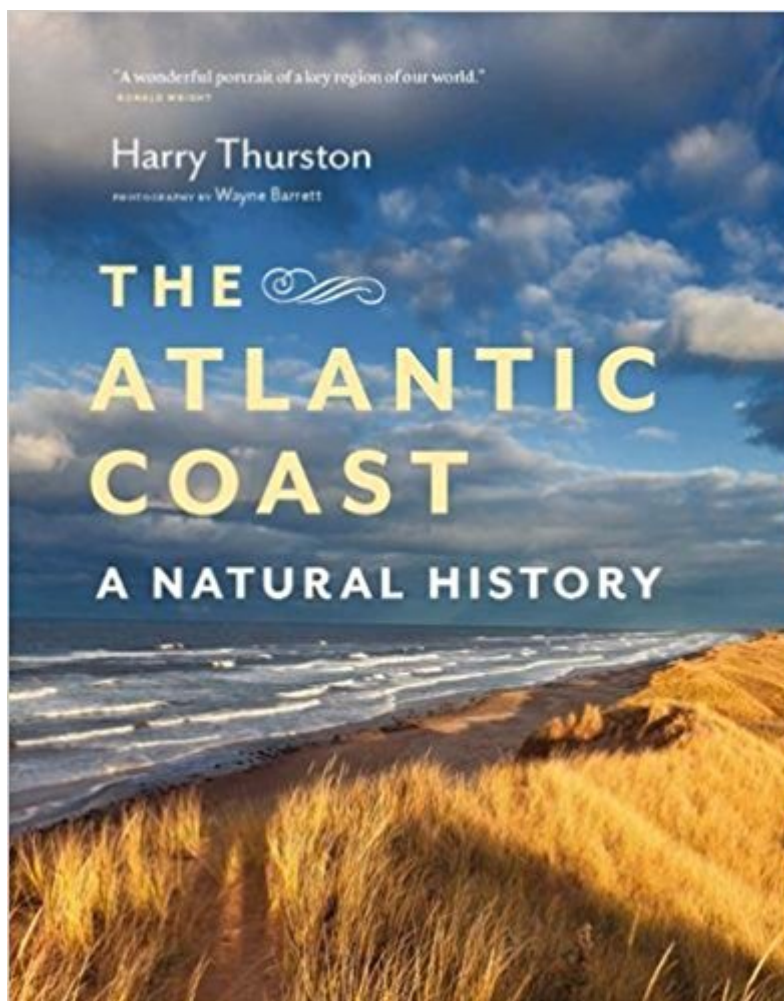


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The Atlantic Coast: A Natural History



Synopsis

The North Atlantic coast of North America—commonly known as the Atlantic Coast—extends from Newfoundland and Labrador through the Maritime Provinces and the Northeastern United States south to Cape Hatteras. This North Atlantic region belongs to the sea. The maritime influence on climate, flora, and fauna is dominant—even far inland. Both on land and at sea, this region is where north meets south, where the great northern boreal forests intermingle with the southern coniferous-hardwood forests, and where the icy Labrador Current and the tropical Gulf Stream vie for supremacy and eventually mix. The Atlantic Coast draws upon the best and most up-to-date science on the ecology of the region as well as the author's lifetime experience as a resident, biologist, and naturalist. The book explores the geological origins of the region, the two major forest realms, and the main freshwater and marine ecosystems, and describes the flora and fauna that characterize each habitat. It ends with a look at what has been lost and how the remaining natural heritage of the region might be conserved for the future. Published in partnership with the David Suzuki Foundation

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Customer Reviews

"[Thurston's] definition of Atlantic Coast encompasses more than the region south of the Gulf of Maine. And that is good. By ignoring political boundaries in favor of natural divisions, Mr. Thurston paints a clearer picture of the plants and animals of the region, the ecological niches they inhabit and the problems tormenting them."—New York Times "Mixing

observations, in-depth research, and vivid prose, Thurston explores the region's geologic, ecologic, and cultural history, and Barrett's gorgeous color photographs of land, sea, and sky supplement Thurston's vivid descriptions"; Publishers

Weekly; Harry Thurston is the best naturalist/writer in the Maritimes (and probably well beyond) and any book by him is well worth the read. This one is an especially valuable addition to anyone's library, and a veritable fount of knowledge about the wildlife of the Atlantic Coast and about that world itself. Farley Mowat; A wonderful portrait of a key region of our world. With evocative writing and scientific rigour, Harry Thurston takes us from the deep time of drifting continents to the environmental challenge of today. Ronald Wright, author of A Short History of Progress

Harry Thurston is the author of several collections of poetry and twelve nonfiction books, including *A Place Between the Tides: A Naturalist's Reflections on the Salt Marsh*, which received the 2005 Sigurd Olson Nature Writing Award. He has also written for such magazines as *Audubon* and *National Geographic*. Thurston lives in Nova Scotia. Wayne Barrett is a partner in Barrett & MacKay Photography. His photographs have been featured in advertisements, magazines, and calendars and have appeared in numerous books. He lives in Prince Edward Island.

As a marine biologist myself, I appreciated this book for the scientific accuracy as well as the vivid and poetic language through which Thurston brings to life the creatures and ecosystems of coastal areas. The book describes the geological phenomena that formed the coast, the various regions of the coast and their ecosystems, and the species that live within these ecosystems. Thurston also includes many useful side-notes that highlight specific areas or phenomena. The book is made even better by the addition of masterful photography that does with pictures what Thurston does with language, elegantly bringing the coast into focus with all its complexity and variety.

why I bought this book: for its excellent descriptions of ocean currents where they're birthed, where they go, what weather they cause, how convergence of currents affect fish and fishing, and best, what happens when currents meet we know the Atlantic as a living entity but this puts a face on its importance

Read up to page 75. Somewhat technical but like it. Good coffee table copy; beautiful photos

I came across this book recently and came straight home to order a copy. It's filled with wonderful information, beautiful pictures and an interesting text. I look forward to using it as I discover the northeastern coast of America.

A beautiful, well produced and very informative book. Harry Thurston is a great writer and if you are interested in a natural history of Atlantic Canada, which is surrounded by coast, this is a book for you.

What initially drew me to this book were two things: the generous amount and high quality of the photographs, and the desire to learn more about the Atlantic coast. A small note about the latter--I moved to the East Coast from Alaska, knowing nothing about the Atlantic, and needed a little help appreciating my "new home." After pondering the quality photos and reading Thurston's elegant, tight, sometimes personal, writing, I have come away with a better understanding and appreciation of the Atlantic coast (at least, the western side; it doesn't really cover the eastern coast although it does mention a little bit concerning Europe). Thurston breaks the text down into chapters for each regional "chunk" of the US's and Canada's coast: the Mid-Atlantic Bight, the Gulf of Maine and the Bay of Fundy, the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and Newfoundland and Labrador. He also covers the coast's wide variety of coastal habitats with their characteristic animal and plant species. However, he also covers the human impact on the coast, and the possible responses of ecosystems to climate change. While Thurston's writing is full of solid information and uses a fair amount of scientific terminology and concepts, it doesn't come off as impenetrable. Yes, knowing basic ecology, zoology, and biology, etc., will only increase enjoyment and understanding of the book, but I don't feel like it's absolutely necessary, and any of the concepts he briefly explains can be found in other books or somewhere online. Another plus about the book is that Thurston uses a number of quotes to help readers get a sense of "then and now": how explorers viewed areas 100-500 years ago, and through Thurston's voice, how they are viewed now, and what their conservation status is. In the back of the book, he lists the common and scientific names of the plants and animals described in the text, along with the cited materials and suggestions for further reading. Overall, I very highly recommend this book, both for the gorgeous photos and approachable, knowledgeable writing.

Superb. The photos are good but the text is most excellently written. The maps are very good. The

publisher is Canadian and the book has something of a Canadian outlook--for example going into as great detail about Canadian portions of the coast as American, my assumption being that an American publisher would be less generous to Canadian portions. It covers from approximately Hatteras to the Arctic, and is not just the coast, but inland a bit. The book covers and covers well the complexities of tidal flows, characteristics of the several kinds of forest systems, and covers wildlife, marine mammals, seabirds, fisheries. It considers the important if somewhat obscure issue of shifting baselines. I found several chapters to be exceptionally interesting. These were Chapter 3, on the forests of the Atlantic coast; Chapter 5 on the Gulf of Maine and the Bay of Fundy; Chapter 6 on the Gulf of St. Lawrence; Chapter 7 on Newfoundland and Labrador; and especially Chapter 8, The Once and Future Atlantic. I have always wondered about that huge tidal flow in the Bay of Fundy--explained well. I had wondered but not read about the Gulf of St. Lawrence--described wonderfully. In a sense this is like a textbook but it doesn't behave like one. Vast amounts of information in a compelling unity holding reader interest throughout.

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