



Illustration by Yoshiyuki Yagi

Good books

Looking for a compelling read in the new year? **Jini Reddy** shares her recommendations

As someone who is drawn to narrative writing that crosses genres and cultures, I've found compiling a book list with *Resurgence & Ecologist* readers in mind a real treat! I've relished the opportunity to shine a light on ideas and authors who are looking at the world, including the natural world, in fresh and compelling ways. I hope you'll enjoy the following:

Small Bodies of Water

Nina Mingya Powles
Omigod!e, 2021
ISBN: 9781838892113

What is a body of water? What has this connective, life-giving force meant to the author at various times in her life? This 'umbrella' theme allows for wide-roaming essays on language, migration, movement, Nature, colonialism and the intersections that exist between them. Nina Mingya Powles has lived in Shanghai, New Zealand, London and Malaysia, and her canvas spans continents – no room for paradoxialism here. In a book filled with metaphors, dreams and vignettes, she brings her poet's eye to all she aligns on. A deserved winner of the Nan Shephard Prize.

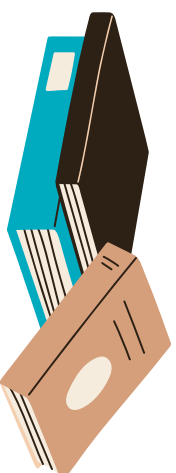


Illustration © GoodStudio / Shutterstock

On the horizon

Everything the Light Touches
Janice Parlat
HarperCollins, 2022

Proofs weren't available at the time of compiling this list, but I'm a huge fan of Janice Parlat's previous fiction, and there's a buzz surrounding *Everything the Light Touches* – it will be published simultaneously in India, the UK, and the US. Parlat is an award-winning Indian author who grew up between the plains of Assam and the hills of Meghalaya and has explored the landscapes and lives of people in Northeast India in her previous novels and short stories. This, her most ambitious novel to date, spans four centuries and a quarter of narratives, but connection underlies all. "How do we see the world around us? In fixity or fluidity? In categories or unity?" she asks. Encounters with travellers, including a young Indian woman, a British science student, the botanist Linnaeus and a plant-obsessed Goethe, feature alongside Indigenous communities in India, and sacred forests. **R**

Jini Reddy is the author of *Wanderland*, shortlisted for the Wainwright Prize for UK Nature Writing and the Stanford Dolman Award for Travel Book of the Year.

Listen up!

Three podcasts with different worldviews

Planet A – Talks on Climate Change
www.buzzsprout.com/11969159

In this podcast, Danish Minister of Climate, Energy and Utilities Dan Jørgensen asks some of the world's leading experts, policymakers and activists to share their thoughts on how to stem climate change. Now into its third season, the podcast offers a variety of thoughtful insights into the challenges we are facing, as well as some of the solutions. We are reminded throughout that Denmark has a goal of becoming a climate leader, but Jørgensen does not shut down criticism, thus creating an informative and refreshingly open conversational tone.

On the Green Fence
www.dbc.com/en/on-the-green-fence/0-55160496

Produced by German broadcaster Deutsche Welle, this fortnightly podcast explores complex and often divisive environmental issues in a friendly and accessible style. Episode highlights include 'We Didn't Have the Luxury to Care about the Environment', where two brothers who grew up in a working-class neighbourhood in western Germany discuss their at times differing takes on environmental activism. Presenter Neil King guides listeners with enough authority and humour to make this a very entertaining and informative listen.

The Climate Question
www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w1r3xhb6

This weekly podcast from the BBC World Service gives a global perspective on climate-related issues with the tagline 'Stories on why we find it so hard to save our own planet, and how we might change that'. General themes range from football – how the 'beautiful game' is affected and contributes to climate change – to gas flaring. More country-focused topics include the North American heathware and 'Putin and the Planet'. Presenters vary each week, but the use of two helps create a tone of 'banter' even though the script is very slick.

Spirit Run: A 6,000-Mile Marathon through North America's Stolen Land
Noé Alvarez
Catapult, 2020
ISBN: 9781948266462

If ever a book deserved a broader readership in the UK, it is this gripping memoir. Noé Alvarez comes from a working-class Mexican American background and manages to escape his job as a fruit packer courtesy of a university scholarship. He struggles to fit in and by chance hears of a First Nations movement called Peace and Dignity Journeys, marathons that help Indigenous runners to reconnect with their lands and ancestry. He quits his studies, signs up, and begins a gruelling 6,000-mile run, a journey of self-discovery and healing across stolen lands from Canada to Guatemala. The run is fraught with physical dangers and human tensions, and the story Alvarez tells is propulsive and deeply moving.

World of Wonders: In Praise of Fireflies, Whale Sharks and Other Astonishments
Aimee Nezhukumatathil
Sauwami Press, 2021
ISBN: 9781788168908

This is far from the matter-of-fact collection of essays about natural phenomena the book's cover suggests. The author, Chicago-born, and of mixed Filipino and South Indian descent, weaves her heritage into the story and presents an unusual and beguiling blend of cultural memoir and Nature writing. Aimee Nezhukumatathil grew up in the United States, and she and her family led a peripatetic existence. Wherever they moved, she found that a particular plant or animal or some other aspect of the natural world offered guidance, connection and kinship. Her irrepressible spirit and zest for life shine throughout the book.

Bewilderment
Richard Powers
Penguin, 2021
ISBN: 97817515634

Trees, most poignantly the redwoods of California, gave *The Overstory*, Richard Powers' Pulitzer Prize-winning opus, its soul. *Bewilderment* continues the ecological fiction theme, but this time the deep love between a widowed astrobiologist and his grief-stricken son takes centre stage. How is a father to offer comfort to a child who is mourning the death of his environmental activist mother as well as raging against the destruction of the planet? Bound by their passion for the natural world and the cosmos, the pair navigate a dystopic near-future and their relationship with touching honesty.

Heaven Is a Place on Earth: Searching for an American Utopia
Adrian Shirk
Counterpoint, February 2022
ISBN: 9781640093300

Becoming a primary carer to her father-in-law in her mid-twenties, with all its attendant anxiety, sets Adrian Shirk off on an odyssey through American utopian communities. Driven by a deep desire to live in community, the author explores everything from the radical faerie communes of Tennessee to the pacifist estate-dance-loving Shakers and the Bronx rebuilding movement. A mix of travel writing, memoir, historical biography, and spiritual journey, *Heaven Is a Place on Earth* – the title is drawn from a Belinda Carlisle song from the 1980s – is impeccably researched and vivid in its telling. Given the current state of the planet, it will likely provoke some serious soul-searching too.