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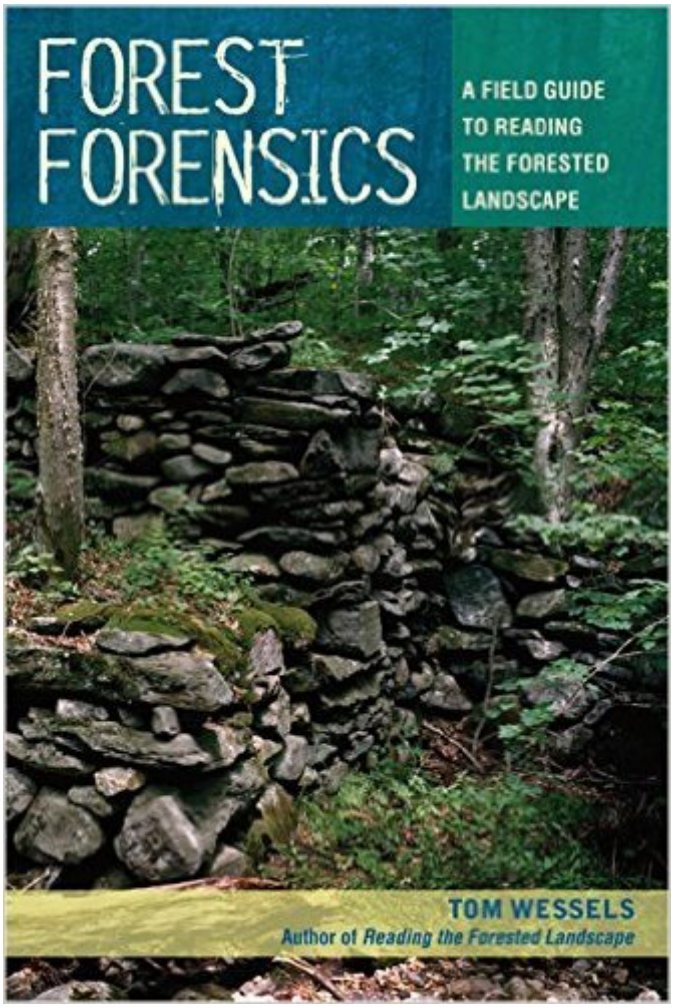
Forest Forensics: A Field Guide To Reading The Forested Landscape



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Synopsis

Take some of the mystery out of a walk in the woods with this new field guide from the author of Reading the Forested Landscape.Thousands of readers have had their experience of being in a forest changed forever by reading Tom Wessels's Reading the Forested Landscape. Was this forest once farmland? Was it logged in the past? Was there ever a major catastrophe like a fire or a wind storm that brought trees down?Now Wessels takes that wonderful ability to discern much of the history of the forest from visual clues and boils it all down to a manageable field guide that you can take out to the woods and use to start playing forest detective yourself. Wessels has created a keyâ •a fascinating series of either/or questionsâ •to guide you through the process of analyzing what you see. Youâ ™ll feel like a woodland Sherlock Holmes. No walk in the woods will ever be the same. 50 color photographs

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Forest forensics is CSI meets AMC. This is wonderful book, if you live in the northeastern US or Canada and spend time in the outdoors. You will come to see the landscape around you in a whole new way - to read the history of the impacts of hurricanes, farming, logging etc. The book has clear descriptions tied to beautiful color plates, so you understand exactly what he's talking about. For example, only large rocks in rock wall indicate that the adjoining land was a hay field, small rocks indicate regular crop cultivation which causes small rocks to surface. Upon first read, even before you take to the field, you will begin to say "Ah ha", as you recall seeing various forms of rock fences, tree forms, or stumps. Not only does he help you read the events of the past, but date them. This

book is very accessible and just plain fun. And best of all, while this book helps you answer lots of questions, your observations will reveal a new level of subtly and leave you with even more questions. If you enjoy the woods, whether kayaker, backpacker, weekend hiker or skier, buy this book. You will see the world around you in a new way.

I liked the two other books I have by Tom Wessels (Reading the Forested Landscape; The Granite Landscape) and thought I would try this one. It's a small book but the coated paper adds weight for the 160 pages. The weight is not a major issue for me but probably would be for long-distance hikers. There are 64 single page photos and 19 photos across 2 facing pages. Photo quality is just fine to very good in nearly all cases. Only two photos didn't work well for me - 4A2 Plow trough adjacent to stone wall, where the break in slope you're supposed to notice unfortunately falls directly in the gutter between the two facing pages, and 5A1 Subtly pillowed and cradled ground - it just looked like pretty flat and featureless ground in this photo, covered with pine needles and oak leaves. It is not easy to photograph subtle landscape features in forest light and shade, so to have issues with only 2 photos in over 80 is not strong criticism. An earlier reviewer was offended by the observation that a flat-topped stump suggests the area was logged. That's a real example certainly, and while there are also more subtle points raised, focusing on them misses the main value of the book to me. It is rare that someone with Tom Wessel's experience in landscape interpretation (or anything else) provides people without that background with the opportunity to participate in his thought process, by sharing publicly what observations he thinks are important, and what his decision-tree logic looks like as he thinks his way through the evidence to answer such questions as what happened, in what order, and when, in an area that is now forest. The heart of the book is in a 7-page section at the beginning, outlining observations/evidence related to Agriculture; Old Growth and Wind; and Logging and Fire evidence. The photographs and brief text are designed to clarify points made in the decision tree statements. You don't need a PhD in forest ecology to use this book, and if you had one you might find it overly simple but as a geologist, it works for me. I found myself saying "aha" as I looked through the photos - thinking of one example after another that I've seen in New England woods over the past 50+ years. His observations about sheep's wool being thick enough to keep them from feeling the barbs in barbed wire fences even helped explain why our bus driver in southern Iceland had to pull over one afternoon a few summers ago and go running back up the road, to untangle a sheep that was caught halfway through the fence along the highway.I think it's a deceptively simple book, and one that I'm glad to have. I recently met someone who teaches at an environmental school in Jackson Hole, who had studied with Tom Wessels. She

confirmed my sense that he would be a great person to spend time in the field with. Until that ever happens, the Forest Forensics book will have to stand in.

This little volume was of interest as an addition to my personal naturalist library. It was a bit more focused on New England than I anticipated which limits its value here in the Blue Ridge but the general principles are of value.

This is a take along pocket sized guide for walking. Based on information presented in "Reading the Forested Landscape, a Natural History of New England". These books are amazing in that they point out information left by previous natural events and humans. If a tree falls and there is no one there to hear it, does it make a noise? Yes, and what it says is so simply explained by Wessels. If you have always wanted to know "The Big Picture", here is the first step into understanding. Enjoy... this is a one of a kind book that applies well to anywhere under the sun.Examples include explinations of the differences between a tree fall caused by wind blow over (thunderstorm, tornado, straight line winds,etc.) , snow loading, dead tree rot, logging and fire kill. Great detail on the differences of tree rotting of pine, cedar, oak, maple, hickory, elm, chestnut. Simple discussion on fence type and wall construction. The hows and whys of early agriculture.I do suggest strongly to buy both books. Both present new information when used together will guide you into a new world filled with the past.

This book is visual guide to understanding the landscape of forests in New England. Wessels, an author and college professor, has a long-standing interest in forested landscapes. In a previous book, "Reading the Forested Landscape", Wessels explained how forested landscapes are filled with clues that point to prior land-use history, storms, or fires. In this book, Wessels provides a collection of photographs which illustrate the clues to reading forested landscapes, as well as a key that can be used to interpret the details of what is seen. The book begins with a short introduction and the key, then there are 70 pages of color plates, followed by additional illustrated discussion. The keys and clues are summarized on quick-reference charts at the end of the book, and technical terms are explained in a glossary.I found this book quite clear and useful. The color photographs and accompanying discussion illustrate Wessel’s points very well. The key is easy to follow and unambiguous. The book is very much tied to the landscape and forested history of New England--it would be interesting to see which of Wessels’ clues might apply to forests in other parts of the country or world. Overall, this is an excellent reference for woods walkers.

This is a must have book for anyone who is a woodsman in New England. But first you need to read Tom Wessels first book Reading the Forested Landscape. This book is more of a companion to his first book.

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