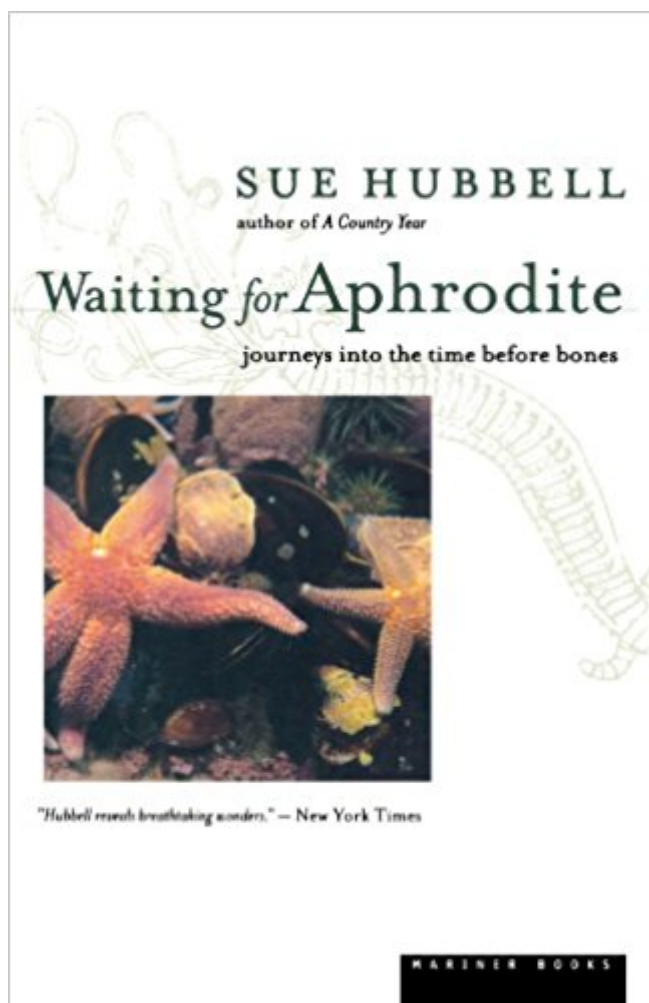


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# Waiting For Aphrodite: Journeys Into The Time Before Bones



## Synopsis

"We humans are a minority of giants, stumbling around in the world of little things," Sue Hubbell writes in this marvelous book. Each of these little things "has a complicated and special way of getting on in the world, different from ours and different from one another's." In *Waiting for Aphrodite* she explores the ways of sponges and sea urchins, horseshoe crabs and the sea mouse known as Aphrodite -- as well as our ways. She takes us on a journey through the mysteries of time -- geological, biological, and personal -- as she writes of the evolution of life on this planet and the evolution of her own life: her childhood next to a Michigan graveyard; the three colleges where she "learned three things"; her twenty-five years keeping bees on a farm in the Ozarks; her move to a "strange little house" in a small Maine town, "the place I wanted to grow old in." And in the tide pools and ocean waters there she discovered a whole new world, the world of little things that inspired this book.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

When Sue Hubbell moved from her longtime home on a farm in Missouri to a house perched on the rocky coast of Maine, the first thing she did was investigate the living things in her new environment to ease the loneliness of a new place. She peered under rocks, in dark crevices, and beneath mounds of leaves, looking for members of nature's secretive ruling class--the invertebrates. In *Waiting for Aphrodite*, Hubbell first trains her microscopic gaze on camel crickets--"They grew a bright orange bump on the back of what we would like to call their necks but mustn't, because bugs

don't have necks"--and sea cucumbers--"cool and leathery and limp, a little like a damp, deflated football." From there, she continues her tour with millipedes, sponges, periwinkles, corals, earthworms, horseshoe crabs, and other underappreciated earth-dwellers, describing each species in lushly metaphoric prose and a perfectly appropriate sense of wonder. These are strange beasts, and their ways are mysterious. Yet Hubbell seeks, and finds, common ground between invertebrates and humans. She writes that the first useful behavioral mandate for isopods such as pill bugs is "Walk toward shelter," a rule that applies easily to vulnerable humans as well. The thing that binds all animals is the constant search for the necessities of life. And for Hubbell, a sense of place and knowledge of her neighbors is as crucial as food or shelter. Hence the heart of the book--her search for a glimpse of the elusive sea mouse, *Aphrodite aculeata*, a small, soft-bodied sea creature with a velvety, iridescent coat. While waiting for *Aphrodite*, she finds gorgeous bits of life all around her and begins to feel at home. --Therese Littleton --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Hubbell is a sunny naturalist who writes stimulating prose. Her newest book, a sibling to her eye-opening *Broadsides from the Other Order: A Book of Bugs* (1993), is a free-roaming survey of the busy lives of invertebrates: "small animals that creep and jump and slither and flutter." More than 95 percent of Earth's animals fall into this immense and spectacularly diverse category, and Hubbell deftly conveys her fascination with some of its more curious representatives. Most of the creatures she portrays are found in environs she has called home (the Ozarks and the coast of Maine), but she reports, too, from further afield, most strikingly Belize's coral reefs. As philosophical as she is descriptive, Hubbell introduces the modest but sensitive pill bug, gives her readers the creeps by chronicling massive invasions of millipedes, and muses on the essentiality of invertebrates, who are perpetually "tidying up the world." Sponges, earthworms, bees, spiders, horseshoe crabs, and *Aphrodite*, the elusive, wormlike sea mouse, all engage Hubbell's astute attention and fluid sense of wonder. Donna Seaman --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book speaks to our responsibility to be stewards of the earth and as Hubbell states at the end - plant acorns for tomorrow. I read this book 14 years ago and give it to people who appreciate the kind of passion that is evident in the text of this book.

Good book in good shape

A little too technical for me.

i love this author when she writes of her life in the missouri bootheel and beekeeping. this was far too scientific for my tastes.

Before reading this book I could never have foreseen myself wading through 232 pages on invertebrates. Sue Hubbell not only maps the journey, she makes it intoxicating and leavens her science with a generous smattering of life philosophy. Which could be tedious from a lesser person. Not from Hubbell, who presents the workings of a sharp intellect with such a light touch that her logic and opinions have a homespun tang. There is an unassailable rightness about many of her views, her argument for conservation for instance. But this isn't a platform for her ideals, it's a showcase for the kind of tiny animals few of us bother to notice unless they threaten us. From crickets to sea mice (the Aphrodite, or part of it, of the title) via spiders, woodlice, sea cucumbers, fireflies, horseshoe crabs, honeybees and many others, we're given just enough information to intrigue and inspire investigation into the generous "Further reading" list at the end of each chapter. It's difficult to make a book like this work. Go too deep, and you've scared-off the layman. Stay on the surface, and you're labelled a dilettante. For my money, Sue Hubbell compromises triumphantly. She puts her small animals centre stage and ensures you'll look on them with new and respectful eyes. But the real heroine of the book is Hubbell herself. Her love for her animals and for life itself blazes through the book and you close it thoroughly warmed through.

Sue Hubbell's book, "Waiting for Aphrodite: Journeys into the Time Before Bones," is a treat for anyone interested in these fascinating creatures. Her coverage of earthworms, millipedes, fireflies, sponges, horseshoe crabs and the strange mouse-like worm, Aphrodita, is a joy to an invertebrate zoologist and should be a great read for laymen who are open to the strange world of so-called creepy-crawlies. I have studied these creatures for much of my life, but could find few errors in Hubbell's chapters. She did her research well. Her life on the Ozarks reminds me of a woman I once met at a scientific conference. She also came from the Ozarks, where her family had worried about her when she was a little girl because she liked to watch salamanders in the rain and spiders spinning their webs. Some of her mountain relatives were sure she was bewitched. I am sure that Sue Hubbell is also "bewitched" by the strange world of these strange creatures- weird enough to live on the planet Mars. I know I was! Read this book if you are at all interested in the natural world

around you. It will introduce you to the real masters of our planet.

This is the third book I've enjoyed by Sue Hubbell. Her curiosity reminds me of my childhood days around my back yard creek when it seemed there was always something to be amazed at, and I took the time to be amazed. Some of the creatures she describes: well, you've always wondered about them; others: you've never heard of. In the background she is describing her sources and the characteristics of these creatures in a personal, straight forward, no axe-to-grind way. Then, she quietly slips in the best argument I've ever heard for trying not to eliminate any of our fellow creatures, regardless of how much or how little we think we understand about their value and their relationship to humans. It could be heavy - but it isn't. It could be trivial - but it isn't.

This is another book that I really love. I learned so much from this book and it is another that I buy to give away.

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