

Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

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Return to Warden's Grove: Science, Desire, and the Lives of Sparrows.

Norment, Christopher (Author)

Mar 2008. 226 p. Univ. of Iowa, hardcover, \$26.00. (1587296330). 508.719.

Norment recounts his three seasons studying the Harris's Sparrow in a remote section of Canada's Northwest Territory in a way that is appealing both for its ornithological insight and extraordinarily personal revelations. Given his often solitary sojourns in nature, opportunities for comparisons to Thoreau abound, but Norment not only observes and describes the sparrows; he also ruminates on the scientific naming of things, which he compares to a map connecting all living creatures. He witnesses the mournful death of a musk ox and performs a postmortem to satisfy his need to understand what has gone wrong in the wild. His own contribution to the unnatural death of wildlife is a source of inner conflict. He wonders if museum specimens might represent nothing more than "our species' passion for collecting things" and can only accept the need to collect and study while also lamenting the loss of so many living things. Norment is a man of conscience, and his book will speak to all who have a passion for wild things.

— *Colleen Mondor*