

## BOOK REVIEW

### Closer to the ground

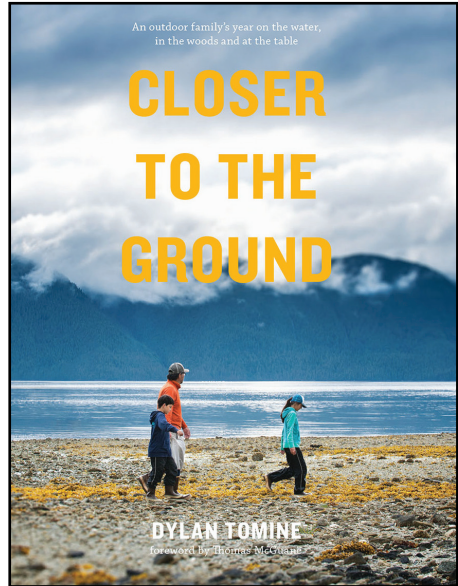
Tomine, D. 2012. Patagonia, Ventura, California, USA. 255 pages. Soft cover. \$17.95. ISBN: 978-1-938340-50-5

The author, Dylan Tomine, has written a delightful account of island life on the Puget Sound. With his family—wife and two kids—he chronicles his adventures over the course of a year, conveniently dividing the book into four sections, one section per season. Each section is split further up to eight chapters addressing a specific aspect of his daily struggles and triumphs. From chanterelle (*Cantharellus cibarius*) hunting to splitting fire wood—Tomine’s writing is humorous and a pleasure to read.

Tomine is well aware of human impact on the planet and although he realizes his carbon footprint cannot be zero, he tries his best to do what’s best and reduce his impact as much as possible. He teaches his children the importance of the various actions someone can do to be a positive steward of the earth. Many times throughout the book I nod in agreement with his sound advice regarding growing food in a home garden to only collecting firewood from downed trees. He fishes with an ecological conscience and ensures that he does all he can to pass his knowledge and skills to his kids. With his Japanese cultural background, Tomine links the past to the present with the idea that the future is not far off. His journey is about growth and learning new things—and experiencing them with his family. It reminds me of my own childhood as I roamed over the countryside—exploring life in irrigation canals and trying to identify a random bird foraging in the trees. The connection we make with nature can be everlasting.

Scattered throughout the book are black and white photographs (and occasionally a few in color) of Tomine’s family captured in various activities that they hold close to their heart, such as fishing, boating, harvesting the garden, crabbing and playing on the beach. His treatments of cutting, collecting and stacking firewood take on a deep personal meaning for me as I recall cutting up old almond trees for winter fires with my father.

One of the highlights I enjoyed about the book was the “significance of birds” sections—one for each season. Only a couple pages long, each section explores an aspect of avian natural history and how it relates to his life. With touching and skillful language, these sections create a personal connection with the author not often encountered in nature



writings. Another key highlight was the several recipes added to the book's second edition. A total of 17 recipes are distributed throughout the book—with each season featuring up to five exciting dishes the Tomine family relishes with delight. Food preparation is frequently encountered in the book. Tomine expresses his lust for life through food and doesn't hesitate to entertain the reader on the ritual of food collection—such as digging for clams or fishing for salmon—to food preparation and consumption. It seems that the human day is measured by what meals are being prepared and Tomine doesn't disappoint.

*Closer to the Ground* is a wonderful read. Tomine's fluid and humorous writing style makes the book a quick but insightful read. The book can easily be viewed a vehicle for personal reflection on embracing nature and showing a level of respect for our planet that needs to be more commonplace. Raising children is never easy, but a key responsibility as parents is keeping our actions with nature "closer to the ground" and fully engaging with whatever comes along. It's about the journey—not necessarily the destination.

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