

## The Nature of Oaks by Doug Tallamy

Review by Ron Jones

As a forester, I have long appreciated oak trees for the beautiful strong lumber it provides and for the benefit to multiple species of wildlife sustained from its mast (acorns). After reading *The Nature of Oaks: The Rich Ecology of Our Most Essential Native Trees* by Douglas W. Tallamy, I developed a new appreciation of the complex and fascinating web of life that oaks sustain. *The Nature of Oaks* reads like a journal highlighting many of the rich cycles of life (death and renewal) during each month of the year.

Beginning with October and ending with September, Tallamy describes monthly visitors, interactions, and community involvements on and around oaks, as well as describing its importance in watershed management, carbon sequestration and micro-climate moderation.

There are certain “cornerstone” animals and plants in ecosystems around the world on which many other species of life depend. Tallamy beautifully describes the central role oaks play in the ecosystem as a cornerstone species supporting a rich web of life.

In Wisconsin, oaks on rich soils (mesic) are gradually being lost through natural succession to shade-loving hardwoods such as maple. Although oak can easily be reproduced on dry sandy soils (xeric), it is more difficult on rich moist soils that can only be reproduced to oak with carefully planned harvesting and site preparation (i.e., prescribe fire).

Tallamy ends his book with the statement “...it is the loss of the common kingpins like oaks that we must prevent as if our well-being depends on them. For it does.” He encourages everyone interested in contributing to the conservation of local animals and insects, and thus enjoying the wonders of nature, to plant one or more oaks on your property or community.

After reading this book, I am inspired to plant a few more oaks on my property next spring.