

The John Burroughs Association, Inc.

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Department of Communications

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The Larch Wins

The John Burroughs Association Outstanding Published Nature Essay Award

The Larch

Rick Bass

Orion, September/October 2012

The John Burroughs Association has selected *The Larch* by Rick Bass (which appeared in the 2012 September/October issue of *Orion*) as the Outstanding Published Nature Essay of 2012. The award will be presented on Monday, April 1, at 12 Noon at the Annual Literary Awards luncheon to be held at the American Museum of Natural History, hosted by the John Burroughs Association. If you would like to attend the ceremony and luncheon, please contact Lisa Breslof at 212-769-5169.

Where John Burroughs had Riverby and Slabsides as his backyard to see the secrets that lurk on all sides in nature, Rick Bass has the Yaak Valley in Northwestern Montana, as his. For years he has been tramping its woods and watching its wildlife. As this year's nature essay contest winner, *The Larch*, attests, looking closely at something others might disregard, [like] the larch tree itself, Rick Bass sees the novel in the familiar, exploring all aspects of this strange

deciduous conifer. His knowledge of the larch is scientific, wide-ranging, and his prose is poetic in its invocation of the nobility of this "humble" subject, as he puts it. *The Larch* fits right in the tradition of a John Burroughs essay as it discovers "something everlastingly present in what appeared to be evanescent." The essay highlights the tree itself, its place in the Yaak Valley ecosystem, and the beauty of its gold as it changes color in Autumn. This award recognizes an outstanding nature essay of the type that John Burroughs himself wrote and made famous.

To honor the legacy of John Burroughs, pioneer of modern nature writing, the John Burroughs Association annually recognizes the best in nature writing and, since 1993, has selected an Outstanding Published Nature Essay. Past Burroughs recipients include John Daniel, Kenneth Brower, John Mitchell, Michael Pollan, Gary Noel Ross, Gerrat Vermeij, Carl Safina, Freeman House, Edward Kanze, David Gessner, Christopher Cokinos, Mark A. Smith, Scott Russell Sanders, Jill Sisson, and Brian Doyle.

The John Burroughs Association is a membership organization of conservation and environmental literary professionals and stewards whose mission is to bring to life the legacy, writing, and natural world of John Burroughs, one the nation's first literary naturalists, by encouraging nature writing and enriching lives through nature. It owns and maintains "Slabsides," Burroughs' writing cabin in West Park, NY, and a 200-acre Sanctuary that surrounds the site, and publishes the newsletter *Wake~Robin*.

For more information about the Association, and a web listing of the Nature Essay Award recipients, visit our website at www.johnburroughsassociation.com/

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