

NEW BOOKS & MEDIA

Catching Stardust

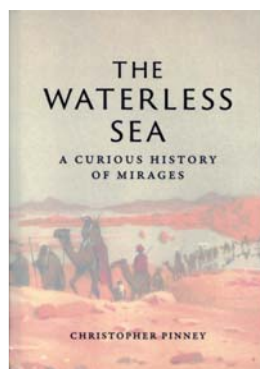
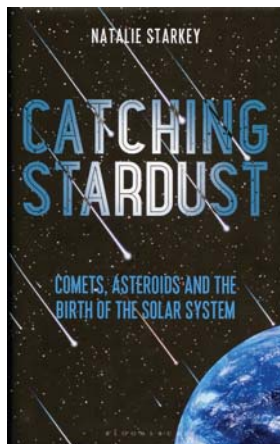
Comets, Asteroids and the Birth of the Solar System

Natalie Starkey

Bloomsbury, 2018. \$27.00

Comets and asteroids, the basic building blocks of the solar system, can provide clues to the formation of the planets and perhaps even to the development of life itself. In *Catching Stardust*, geologist and cosmochemist Natalie Starkey explores the history of these small solar-system bodies, some of the missions launched to study them, their potential as sources of metals and other important raw materials, and the danger posed by a possible catastrophic collision with Earth. Written for a general audience, the book attempts to convey our planet's extensive past and explore what the future may hold.

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The Waterless Sea

A Curious History of Mirages

Christopher Pinney

Reaktion Books, 2018. \$29.00

Anyone who has driven down a hot asphalt country road will have seen in the distance what appears to be a pool of standing water that remains perpetually out of reach. In *The Waterless Sea*, anthropologist Christopher Pinney delves into the many accounts of fantastic mirages that have been reported over the centuries.

No mere optical illusions, he says, mirages are real and are produced by atmospheric optics. Their interpretations, however, have been shaped by culture, politics, religion, and science. Their illusory qualities drive Pinney's philosophical discussion, which touches on a number of topics, such as their use as metaphor and moral lesson. Historical photos, prints, lithographs, and paintings illustrate Pinney's erudite narrative.

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Greening the Alliance

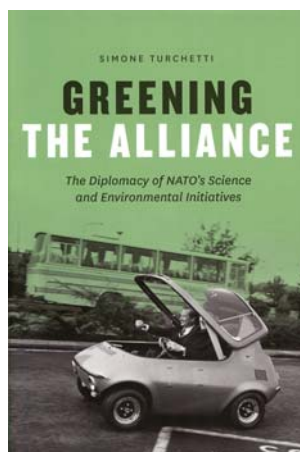
The Diplomacy of NATO's Science and Environmental Initiatives

Simone Turchetti

U. Chicago Press, 2019. \$37.50 (paper)

In this fascinating new study, University of Manchester historian Simone Turchetti explores NATO's sponsorship of environmental science during the Cold War. NATO alliance members invested significant funds in environmental science and conservation during the late 20th century, which led to the collection of significant atmospheric, oceanographic, and climate data. Turchetti argues that NATO prioritized those sciences because of their potential to enhance surveillance capabilities, but he also shows that NATO's scientific efforts helped smooth diplomatic negotiations among member nations. The book is a welcome contribution to the scholarly literature on environmental science, diplomatic history, and science in the global Cold War.

—MB



North Pole

Nature and Culture

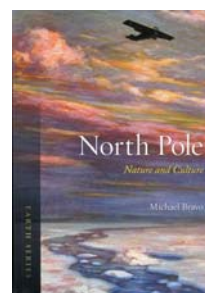
Michael Bravo

Reaktion Books, 2019.

\$24.95 (paper)

Until a little more than a century ago, no one had actually visited the North Pole. That did not stop natural philosophers, armchair geographers, novelists, and others from speculating about it. In *North Pole: Nature and Culture*, Michael Bravo of the Scott Polar Research Institute discusses the "mysterious power and allure" of one of the most inhospitable places on Earth. His ambitious text begins with the study of astronomy and the North Pole Star by early peoples such as the Inuit and the ancient Greeks, and then moves on to Renaissance polar maps and globes, the development of navigation by magnetic compass, polar expeditions, and a discussion of the North Pole as a literary and narrative device that has inspired numerous works of fiction and political satire. The slim, 254-page volume is nicely illustrated with more than 100 paintings, engravings, and photos.

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Universal Life

An Inside Look Behind the Race to Discover Life Beyond Earth

Alan Boss

Oxford U. Press, 2019.

\$24.95

Launched on 6 March 2009, the *Kepler* space telescope was NASA's first mission dedicated to finding Earth-like planets, or exoplanets. In *Universal Life*, Alan Boss, an astrophysicist and chair of NASA's Exoplanet Exploration Program Analysis Group, presents a history of modern planet hunting, starting with *Kepler* and moving on to a host of other missions proposed over the past several decades. Boss's narrative focuses on the day-to-day trials and travails of seeing a mission through from proposal to launch and beyond. The book is the third in a series that includes *Looking for Earths: The Race to Find New Solar Systems* (1998) and *The Crowded Universe: The Search for Living Planets* (2009).

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