



# Unseen City: The Majesty of Pigeons, the Discreet Charm of Snails & Other Wonders of the Urban Wilderness

By Nathanael Johnson

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It all started with Nathanael Johnson's decision to teach his daughter, Josephine, the names of every tree they passed as they walked up the hill to daycare in San Francisco, CA. It was a ridiculous project, not just because she couldn't even say the word "tree" yet, but also because he couldn't name a single one of them.

When confronted with the futility of his mission, his instinctive response was to expand it, Don Quixote-style, until its audacity obscured its stupidity. And so the project expanded to include an expertise in city-dwelling birds (the raptors, the shockingly shrewd crows, the gulls, the misunderstood pigeons), rodents (raccoons, rats, squirrels), and tiny crawling things (the superpowers of snails, the vast intercontinental warfare of ants).

There's an unseen world all around us. There are wonders that we walk past every day without noticing. Johnson has written a book that will widen the pinhole through which we see the world. What does the world look like through the eyes of a turkey vulture, or a squirrel, or an ant? What does a sidewalk Ginkgo biloba "see?" What would you learn each morning if you understood how to speak pigeon? If we look closely enough, Johnson believes that the walk to the subway can be just as entrancing as a walk through the forest.

Follow along as the author and his family search for the beauty and meaning of nature in an urban jungle.

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*By Nathanael Johnson*

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"[A] refreshing, thought-provoking and humorous father-and-daughter eco-quest...'Unseen City' is a modern classic of nature writing, but also a moving story about learning to be a parent." - *Associated Press*  
"If every age produces its own distinct variety of nature lovers, and history seems to show it's so, then Nathanael Johnson is perfectly suited for our urban century... the book will resonate with urban homesteaders everywhere -- young professionals making a family life in the city." -*San Francisco Chronicle*

#### From the Back Cover

"For days, I was reading passages from 'Unseen City' aloud and repeating my new discoveries to whoever would listen. But this is more than a trove of facts: it's a model for city living. Nathanael Johnson's curiosity is contagious--an irresistible call into the wild world waiting just steps away on the sidewalk. I loved this book." -*Robin Sloan, author of Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore*

"This delightful book reminds us it doesn't matter where you see nature; it's seeing nature that matters. A great addition to any city dweller's library." -*Eugenia Bone, food journalist and author of Mycophilia*

"A delightful romp through the lives of species we humans (without irony!) dismiss as 'invasives'--and a very funny guide to how we in fact create our cities together with creatures and plants we barely see or acknowledge. Nathanael Johnson is now officially one of my favorite storytellers." -*Jenny Price, Urban Ranger and author of Flight Maps*

"Curiosity is one of the most appealing of human qualities, and the best thing about *Unseen City* isn't that Johnson has it -- it's that he makes it infectious. Anyone can take a close look at snails -- or weeds or squirrels or ginkgos -- but Johnson, in smart, gentle prose, will make you wonder why you never did." - *Tamar Haspel, Washington Post columnist*

"It might seem odd at first to have a book about the wonder of nature focusing on those familiar backyard nuisances such as pigeons and snails. But as Johnson eloquently demonstrates, if we miss what is close at hand we miss something special about what it means to be alive."-*Mark Lynas, environmental activist and author of The God Species*

"The city is alive with life, crazy with biodiversity we hardly ever notice. Nathanael Johnson set out to show his daughter the wonder all around her, and here he shares that gift with you. Charming, insightful, and eye-opening - this is a book that'll rekindle your love of nature, and have you looking at your own city with fresh eyes." -*Ramez Naam, author of The Nexus trilogy*

#### About the Author

Nathanael Johnson is the food editor for *Grist*. He lives in Berkeley, California.

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#### From reader reviews:

**Charles Duda:**

Hey guys, do you would like to finds a new book to study? May be the book with the subject Unseen City: The Majesty of Pigeons, the Discreet Charm of Snails & Other Wonders of the Urban Wilderness suitable to you? Typically the book was written by well-known writer in this era. The actual book untitled Unseen City: The Majesty of Pigeons, the Discreet Charm of Snails & Other Wonders of the Urban Wilderness is the main of several books this everyone read now. This kind of book was inspired many men and women in the world. When you read this publication you will enter the new way of measuring that you ever know just before. The author explained their thought in the simple way, consequently all of people can easily to know the core of this guide. This book will give you a lot of information about this world now. So you can see the represented of the world within this book.

**John Tillery:**

Spent a free time for you to be fun activity to try and do! A lot of people spent their free time with their family, or all their friends. Usually they doing activity like watching television, planning to beach, or picnic in the park. They actually doing same task every week. Do you feel it? Would you like to something different to fill your own personal free time/ holiday? May be reading a book might be option to fill your no cost time/ holiday. The first thing you ask may be what kinds of guide that you should read. If you want to try look for book, may be the publication untitled Unseen City: The Majesty of Pigeons, the Discreet Charm of Snails & Other Wonders of the Urban Wilderness can be fine book to read. May be it can be best activity to you.

**Erwin Fast:**

Reading can called brain hangout, why? Because if you find yourself reading a book especially book entitled Unseen City: The Majesty of Pigeons, the Discreet Charm of Snails & Other Wonders of the Urban Wilderness your thoughts will drift away trough every dimension, wandering in each aspect that maybe unfamiliar for but surely will become your mind friends. Imaging each and every word written in a book then become one web form conclusion and explanation in which maybe you never get previous to. The Unseen City: The Majesty of Pigeons, the Discreet Charm of Snails & Other Wonders of the Urban Wilderness giving you one more experience more than blown away your mind but also giving you useful information for your better life in this particular era. So now let us show you the relaxing pattern here is your body and mind are going to be pleased when you are finished examining it, like winning a casino game. Do you want to try this extraordinary paying spare time activity?

**Naomi Taylor:**

This Unseen City: The Majesty of Pigeons, the Discreet Charm of Snails & Other Wonders of the Urban Wilderness is completely new way for you who has attention to look for some information because it relief your hunger details. Getting deeper you in it getting knowledge more you know or perhaps you who still having little digest in reading this Unseen City: The Majesty of Pigeons, the Discreet Charm of Snails & Other Wonders of the Urban Wilderness can be the light food to suit your needs because the information inside this book is easy to get by means of anyone. These books build itself in the form that is certainly reachable by anyone, sure I mean in the e-book type. People who think that in reserve form make them feel

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