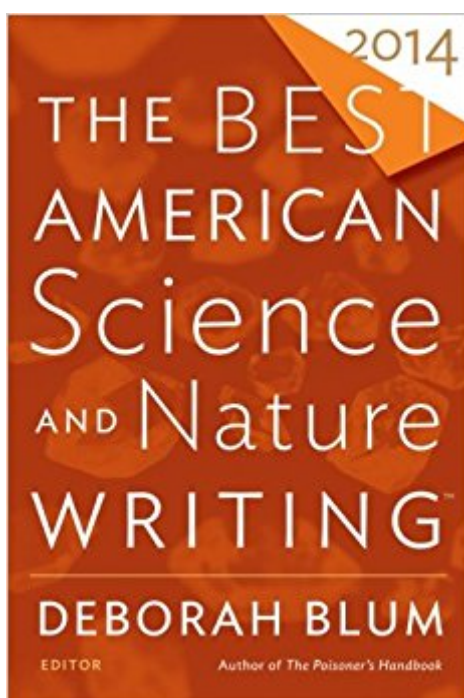


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# The Best American Science And Nature Writing 2014 (The Best American Series Â®)



## Synopsis

“Undeniably exquisite . . . The essays in the collection [are] meditations that reveal not only how science actually happens but also who or what propels its immutable humanity.” Maria Popova, *Brain Pickings* “A stimulating compendium.” Kirkus Reviews  
Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and author Deborah Blum selects the year’s top science and nature writing from writers who balance research with humanity and in the process uncover riveting stories of discovery across the disciplines.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Mariner paperback, 2013, previous ISBN 978-0-544-00343-9 --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

The Best American Series In an era of misleading headlines and cherry picked facts, good science reporting is hard to find. We re left wondering, should we eat genetically modified food? Do we really want to know if we have an incurable genetic disease before the symptoms appear? The articles in The Best American Science and Nature Writing 2014 challenge these questions, and many others, with guest editor Deborah Blum striving to show readers the curving, complicated line that links discovery and development, choice and consequence. At times meditative, passionate, and always deeply inquisitive, the articles in this collection reveal our world and ourselves, both beautiful and astonishingly complex. The Best American Science and Nature Writing 2014 includes Nicholas

Carr, Amy Harmon, Barbara Kingsolver, Maggie Koerth-Baker, Elizabeth Kolbert, Seth Mnookin, E.O. Wilson, Carl Zimmer and others [INSERT AUTHOR PHOTO, Author photo (c) Mark Bennington] DEBORAH BLUM, guest editor, is a Pulitzer-prize winning journalist and the author of five books, including *The Poisoner's Handbook*. She writes about environmental chemistry for *The New York Times* at Poison Pen and is a blogger for *Wired* at Elemental. TIM FOLGER, series editor, is a contributing editor at *Discover* and writes about science for several magazines. Author photo (c) Mark Bennington "

I have been reading this anthology every year. This year's collection was excellent as always, but as a whole, these essays were quite bleak, almost apocalyptic. The topics covered include, for example: the rapid extinction of species, the erosion of skills as we rely increasingly on simulators rather than hands-on, the growing risk of rampant and untreatable disease from antibiotic-resistant bacteria. Not all the essays were full of foreboding, but most treated serious, even somber topics. There was not a lot of good news. When it was my turn to propose a selection, I had my Book Club read this year's anthology. I was a little concerned about my recommendation as these collective essays were such a "downer", but we had one of the liveliest discussions in months, and many of the attendees thanked me for recommending, and said that they would be reading these anthologies in the future.

It's inevitable that there will be ups and downs in books like these. You can't please everyone. I did find more ups than downs, though, and thought this was a very interesting compilation of articles. I think the one that has stayed with me longer than any others was the one about the effect of television on birth control. Truly fascinating.

I always enjoy reading the stories in these collections. Some years the guest editor may have a slant that is more or less interesting. You can get a hint by looking at the table of contents. Alas, like much science writing, things go out of date in 5-10 years, due to the rapid advances in various areas of science. Ah, progress!

Variety is the hallmark of this fantastic collection of essays and articles. There is certainly something that will appeal to every reader; however, those with a wide range of interests will get the most enjoyment from this book. Deborah Blum has compiled articles from an assortment of writers and publications. The topics range from Hansen's Disease (AKA leprosy), the right to die, the

resurrection of extinct species (à la Jurassic Park), and the inevitable end of the world. Because this is an anthology, the articles differ in scope, tone, and style. Consequently, you may find certain chapters less appealing. For me, I struggled to comprehend the article about genetics, which seemed to have been written with a more technical audience in mind. While I personally loved the stream-of-consciousness essay on knitting by Barbara Kingsolver, others have found the abstract, dreamy style slow and dull. Overall, this is a great collection. I plan to keep an eye out for the 2015 edition.

This one had some very interesting articles (the one about de-extincting species was excellent, so was the one about the formation of the solar system; the one about the over-use of antibiotics was terrifying), and I learned quite a bit (the now extinct species of frog that gestated in the mother's stomach is fascinating). But too many of the articles were about global warming and climate change. I am not a global warming denier, and I believe it is an issue that we need to take seriously. But more than half of the articles in this book dealt with that issue. I want a more diverse selection of articles in this kind of a book. Several articles in the book discussed the "anthropocene

This collection, like all these Best American ... annual collections, is a delight to read. A few essays I've already read and am glad to revisit, but most are new. They make great travel and bed-time reading, when you don't feel like dealing with long form writing. This particular volume is heavy on some serious topics - climate change, habitat destruction, mass extinction - which makes it a sometimes gloomy read but also reinforces the importance of these issues. Highly recommended.

A really good collection of science and nature writing. I found myself extremely interested and at times fascinated with many of the essays contained in this collection. Being an amateur naturalist, I was more drawn to the essays pertaining to nature and animals, of which there are several excellent ones, but also was quite taken with essays regarding humans and assisted euthanasia, the precarious position in space our home planet is in, how our brains crave paper pages and books over e-readers, and one very scary essay which considers our future in a post antibiotic world. Overall a very enjoyable read which taught me a lot. I don't think one could ask for more than that from a collection of science writing.

An excellent selection of science and environmental articles, most of which tell a story about people impacted by the advancement of scientific knowledge or environmental developments. Drawn from

a wide variety of sources, the collection is sure to provide fresh reading for even the most widely read science enthusiasts. The authors are very good at filling in the background history of each topic and give the readers a wider perspective. I particularly enjoyed the articles dealing with the threat to Florida's orange crop, the impact of DNA testing on genealogy, and, of course, the attempts to bring extinct species back to life through cloning techniques.

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