



## Donald Culross Peattie

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Donald Culross Peattie (PEE-tee) was the son of Robert Burns Peattie, a journalist, and Elia Wilkinson Peattie, a novelist. After graduating from Chicago University High School in 1916, Peattie entered the University of Chicago with a scholarship in English literature that he had won in a competitive examination. After two years at that institution he moved to New York. He later entered Harvard where he specialized in the natural sciences—not with the intention of becoming a scientist but because he considered them essential background for his chosen career of nature writer. He graduated cum laude in 1922; in the same year he received the Witter Bynner Poetry Prize. He worked as a botanist in the Department of Agriculture from 1922 until his first book, *Cargoes and Harvests*, appeared in 1926. In 1923 he had married the novelist Louise Redfield, who collaborated with him on several of his early works.

Although he produced several works of fiction, Peattie is best known for his many nature books, which attained a wide popularity. *An Almanac for Moderns*, the day-to-day observations and reflections of a sensitive naturalist, was awarded the Gold Medal of the Limited Editions Club. He was granted a Guggenheim Fellowship for creative writing in 1936 and 1937. His 1939 *Flowering Earth* was named the best horticultural book of the year and in 1940 received a silver medal from the Commonwealth Club of California. His autobiographical *The Road of a Naturalist* was awarded a prize by Houghton Mifflin in 1941. In addition to writing books, Peattie conducted nature columns in the *Washington Evening Star* and the *Chicago Daily News*; he was also a roving editor for *Reader's Digest*.

Peattie has been called America's most lyrical naturalist. He was essentially a poet, for in his writing he combined science with the spirit of poetry. His work reveals a strong appreciation for beauty and a sense of the unity of nature, considerable philosophic insight, and a concern for good prose. Although he has been criticized in some instances for an oversentimentalized approach to his material, he produced enduring works of high literary quality. He was a popularizer in the highest sense of the term.

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