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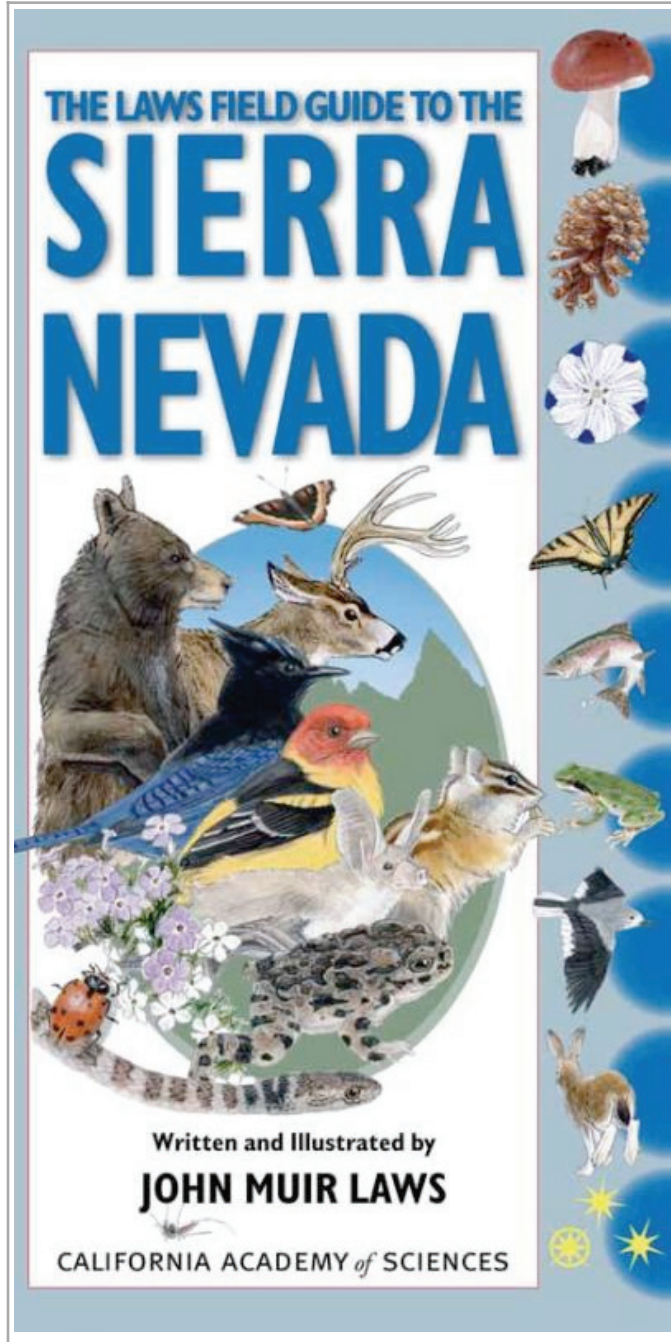
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Sierra Nevada: Global Hub of Chipmunk Diversity

Review of The Laws Field Guide

by Pamela Biery

If you love the Sierra Nevada, "The Laws Field Guide to the Sierra Nevada" deserves a space in your backpack, on your coffee table, or on your child's desk. This first-edition comprehensive 8-by-4-inch gem is a beautiful resource for better understanding the flora and fauna of the Sierra Nevada. Providing detailed sections on insects, tracks, stars, scat, and mushrooms as well as plants, birds, and animals, this book offers the in-field identification tools that spark interest for more research once at home. Since the book is focused on illustration, it is a perfect all-age introduction to using field guides.

Jack Laws (nom de plume, John Muir Laws) is a trained wildlife biologist, an associate of the California Academy of Sciences and has worked as an environmental educator for more than 25 years. For the guide, he supplemented his own field research and subsequent illustrations with the extensive specimen resources at The California Academy of Sciences, ensuring accuracy. He also field-tested the book with all ages, collecting input from children and young adults in addition to veteran adult hikers and back packers.

The guide, published by Heyday Books, came to my attention in summer 2006. Heyday Books founder and publisher Malcom Margolin was a guest speaker at the Sierra Nevada Alliance's Annual Conference and announced the release of the Laws Guide. Instead of the expected sound-bite sales pitch, Margolin brought to light some little known facts included in Laws' book: for instance, did you know that the Sierra Nevada has the world's greatest diversity of chipmunks? Or that when you see a lizard doing push-ups he really is deliberately puffing himself up to look larger? These kinds of natural history insights are woven throughout Laws Field Guide, and are designed to increase awareness of the Sierra Nevada's rare biodiversity.

Laws' vision of conservation for the remaining riches in the Sierra Nevada environment kept him motivated throughout six years of book development. In the intro to his book, he states, "By observing, interacting and discovering, we come to know and love. This love and knowledge is what motivates us to stewardship. Inspiring conservation and stewardship is my best hope for The Laws Field Guide to the Sierra Nevada."

Laws is currently starting work organizing fundraising and conceptual planning for a guide to Coastal California and the provinces and adjacent mountains of Big Sur, through the Redwood Belt and north to the Oregon border. He has also previously published "Sierra Birds: A Hiker's Guide."

The Laws Field Guide to the Sierra Nevada is available at Bookshelf Stores in Tahoe City and Truckee. For more information on the book, visit johnmuirlaws.com.

The Sierra Nevada Classroom Project

Efforts to create a curriculum tying the Laws Field Guide to the State of California education standards and securing funding to donate sets of field guides to schools throughout the Sierra Nevada are now underway. Become a sponsor of this education project through the non-profit Heyday Institute. Contact Kelly Lee, Heyday's Director of Development, at 510-549-3564 Ext. 307.

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