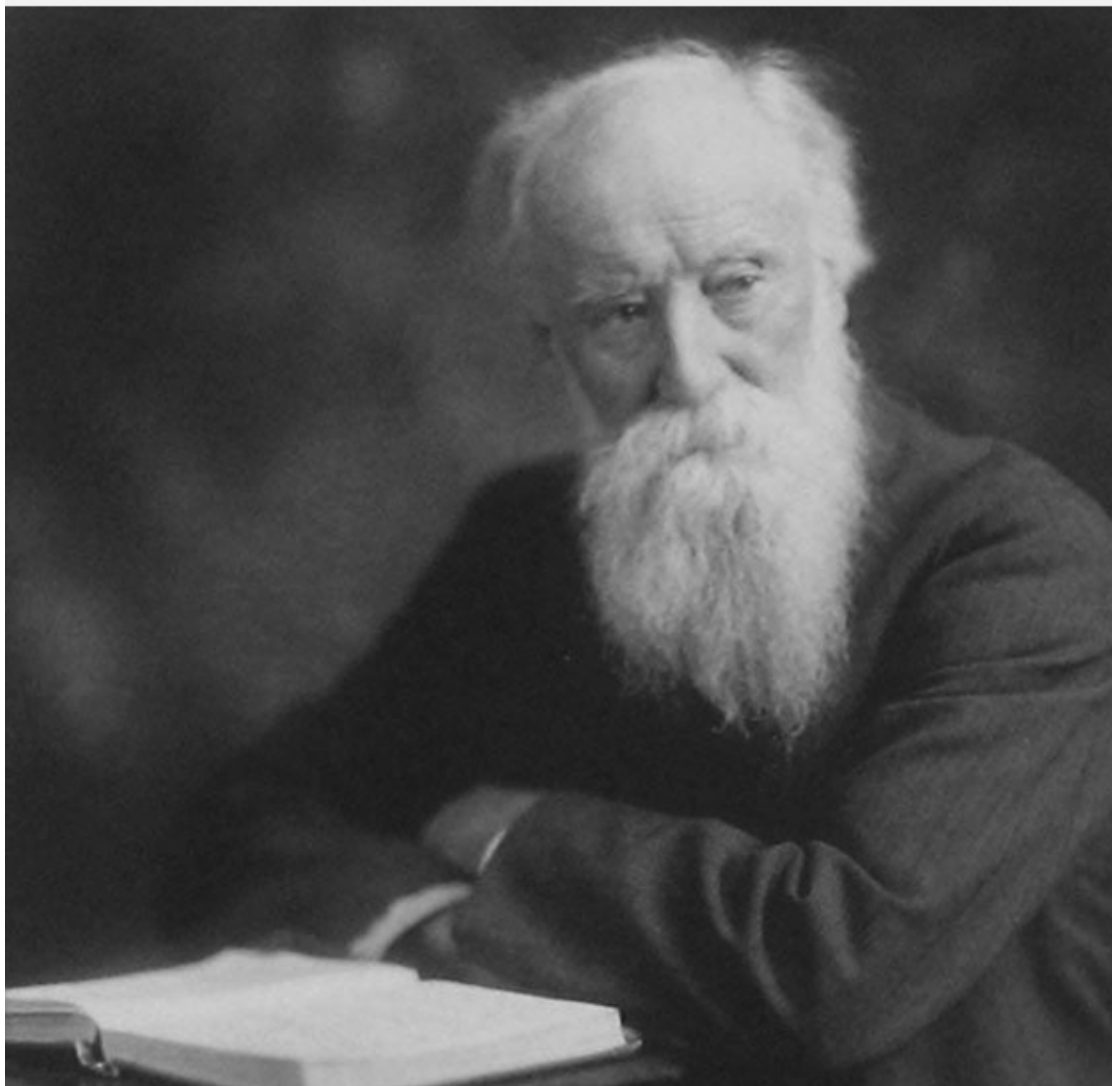




DELPHI
CLASSICS

John Burroughs
Complete Works



Series Sixteen

The Complete Works of
JOHN BURROUGHS

(1837-1921)



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The Delphi Classics Catalogue

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Burroughs". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'J' and 'B'.

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Version 1

The Complete Works of
JOHN BURROUGHS

With introductory material by Fred Burwell



By Delphi Classics, 2026

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Complete Works of John Burroughs



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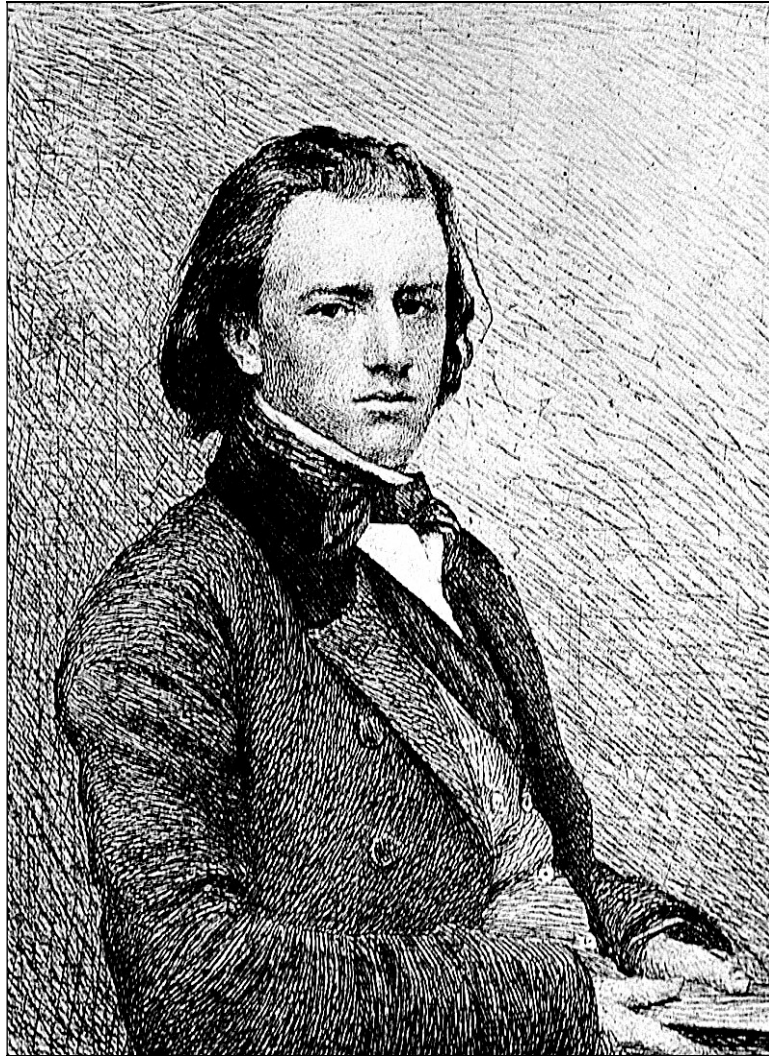
The Books



Roxbury, New York, c. 1900 — John Burroughs' birthplace



The town today



Burroughs as a young man, c. 1856

Wake-Robin (1871)



Wake-Robin was John Burroughs' second published book, but the first to include some of the essays that became the foundation for his renown as a nature writer. Published by Hurd & Houghton in 1871, Burroughs revised and expanded the book in 1877 for republication, employing illustrations from *A History of North American Birds*, by Baird, Brewer and Ridgeway.

As a child, growing up on the family farm in New York's Catskill Mountains, Burroughs had spent countless hours hiking and exploring and, although he felt an affinity with the natural world, it wasn't until he was a young man that he began his serious studies and observations of nature. Walt Whitman encouraged his writing and he began to publish nature pieces in *The Atlantic Monthly* and in a literary newspaper, the *New York Leader*. Burroughs was especially fascinated by ornithology and for his first nature book, collected together several of his detailed observations of and reflections on birds. An article by G. Clyde Fisher in the March-April 1921 issue of *Natural History*, describes how Burroughs came up with *Wake-Robin* as the title:

"...One morning in the kitchen at Woodchuck Lodge, while Mr. Burroughs was frying the bacon and making pancakes for breakfast, I asked him whether it was the painted wake-robin for which his first book was named. 'No,' he replied, 'it was not, but it was the large-flowered white wake-robin (*Trillium grandiflorum*).

" 'I had several possible titles and I took them to Walt Whitman. He looked them over and when he came to 'Wake-Robin,' he asked, 'What's that?' I told him it was the name of a wild flower. He then said, "That's your title" — and this helped me to decide upon the name 'Wake-Robin.'

'After the book was published, in speaking to me about it, Emerson said, "Capital title! Capital title!"'

In an article published in *The Bookman* in June 1919, Burroughs reminisced to Henry Litchfield West about how he came to write the book:

"This book was written while Mr. Burroughs was a vault keeper in the Treasury Department in Washington. With nothing, but a steel door in front of him, his mind went wandering over the hills and fields. 'I had very little to do, except to go in and out of the vault', he said when I asked him how he came to write his first book, 'and so I began to write down my experiences; I wrote because I had an itching to write. I do not know any other way to express it. I remember I was pleased when the book began to sell, rather slowly at first, but soon with a steady increase.' He did not say, what I can say for him, that men and women everywhere heralded the coming of a prophet of nature whose message they could understand."

Wake-Robin received glowing reviews. *Scribner's Monthly* described it as "a most delicious book for summer reading," and went on to note some of Burroughs' unusual ability to connect readers with nature, with a style more literary than scientific:

"With comparatively little which could be called exact ornithological information, it yet is so graphic in its touches that one rises from it feeling as if he knew all about every bird mentioned in it. This is because the "touches" are from the hand of a student who might have written an ornithology if he had chosen. But many men have written ornithologies who could not have written *Wake-Robin*. Mr. Burroughs loves all nature and is at home in all her ways... To him also will be given a fine felicity of descriptive phrase, such as lifetimes of patience less warm-hearted could never compass. This is perhaps the most notable charm in Mr. Burroughs' book."

The Nation compared Burroughs favorably to other prominent nature writers:

“Mr. Burroughs’ ‘Wake Robin’ — a graceful and appropriate title — belongs to the class of writings of which Mr. [Henry David] Thoreau and Col. [Thomas Wentworth] Higginson have given us the best-known examples. The several papers of which it is composed...are marked by the same combination of literary excellence and careful scientific observation which distinguishes the writings above-mentioned. Mr. Burroughs is not as practised a writer as Col. Higginson, nor has he his poetical imagination and wide range of illustration. He lacks, too, the originality and dry humor of Thoreau; on the other hand, he is more of a specialist than either of these and possesses great quickness and accuracy of observation and excellent powers of description. And he is truly fond of the woods and goes into them to see them and not himself. The book will furnish entertaining reading for any intelligent lover of nature...”

And *The Atlantic Monthly* praised both the natural and poetic qualities of Burroughs’ prose:

“It is written with a grace which continually subordinates itself to the material...Mr. Burroughs adds a strain of genuine poetry, which makes his papers unusually delightful, while he has more humor than generally falls to the ornithological tribe. His nerves have a poetical sensitiveness, his eye a poetical quickness; and many of his descriptive passages impart all the thrill of his subtle observation. It is in every way an uncommon book that he has given us; fresh, wholesome, sweet and full of a gentle and thoughtful spirit; a beautiful book within...”

Low and Marston published *Wake-Robin* in Great Britain. *The Examiner* described it as “slightly sentimental, but very charming... altogether refreshing and it has special interest for English readers in that it gossips genially and practically, about the life, manners and customs of birds on the other side of the Atlantic.”

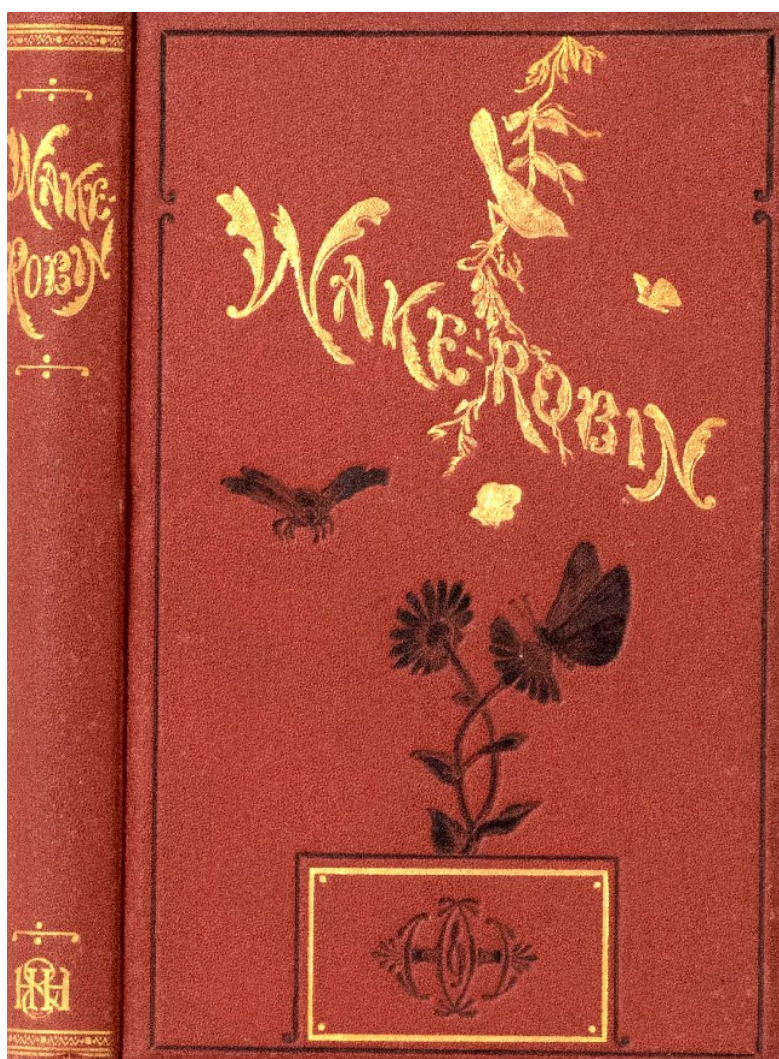
The Athenaeum of London provided a seemingly lone dissenting voice in a review that also included *Hints on Shore Shooting*, by English author, James Edward Harting. The reviewer complained that both authors wrote too much about themselves:

“Egotism is a sin which easily besets both Mr. Burroughs and Mr. Harting. They tell the world things which are interesting only to those to whom they themselves are near or dear. Books on science ought to be full of their subjects and not of the doings of their authors...”

However, they recognized Burroughs’ gift with language while also poking fun:

“...The book of Mr. Burroughs is quite as flimsy as the book of Mr. Harting. But the English writer on the American side of the Atlantic is a master in the art of making sentences and rounding periods with wonderfully little information in them. Mr. Burroughs narrates in six pages that he was once nearly lost; and the weary reader of his book cannot help reflecting that if the author had been completely lost the reader might have escaped the weariness... when all the essays have been read, the impression left is that the reader has not read an ill-made sentence and has not stored up half-a-dozen facts worth remembering.”

Wake Robin sold well on both sides of the pond and proved to be the dawn of Burroughs’ long rein as one of the world’s premier interpreters of the natural world.



The first edition

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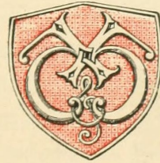
THE BLUEBIRD.

THE INVITATION.



WAKE-ROBIN

BY
JOHN BURROUGHS



NEW YORK
PUBLISHED BY HURD AND HOUGHTON

Cambridge: Riverside Press

1871

The first edition's title page



ROBINS IN THE MEADOW

PUBLISHERS' NOTE TO SECOND EDITION.



IN ISSUING A second and revised edition of *Wake-Robin*, the author has added a chapter on *The Bluebird*, and otherwise enlarged and corrected the text here and there. The illustrations are kindly furnished by Prof. Baird, and are taken from the "History of North American Birds," by himself, Dr. Brewer, and Mr. Ridgeway, and published by Little, Brown, & Co. — the most complete work on our birds that has yet appeared. The hermit-thrush represented is the Western hermit (*Turdus ustulatis*), and we have been obliged to substitute the black fly-catcher (*Saponis nigricans*) for the pewee, and the house finch (*Corpodacus frontalis*) for the purple finch; but the difference is hardly appreciable in an uncolored engraving.

November, 1876.

PREFACE.



THIS IS MAINLY a book about the Birds, or more properly an invitation to the study of Ornithology, and the purpose of the author will be carried out in proportion as it awakens and stimulates the interest of the reader in this branch of Natural History.

Though written less in the spirit of exact science than with the freedom of love and old acquaintance, yet I have in no instance taken liberties with facts, or allowed my imagination to influence me to the extent of giving a false impression or a wrong coloring. I have reaped my harvest more in the woods than in the study; what I offer, in fact, is a careful and conscientious record of actual observations and experiences, and is true as it stands written, every word of it. But what has interested me most in Ornithology, is the pursuit, the chase, the discovery; that part of it which is akin to hunting, fishing, and wild sports, and which I could carry with me in my eye and ear, wherever I went.

I cannot answer with much confidence the poet's inquiry,
"Hast thou named all the birds without a gun?"

but I have done what I could to bring home the "earth and the sky" with the sparrow I heard "singing at dawn on the alder bough." In other words, I have tried to present a live bird, — a bird in the woods or the fields, — with the atmosphere and associations of the place, and not merely a stuffed and labeled specimen.

A more specific title for the volume would have suited me better, but not being able to satisfy myself in this direction, I cast about for a word thoroughly in the atmosphere and spirit of the book, which I hope I have found in "Wake-Robin" — the common name of the white Trillium, which blooms in all our woods, and which marks the arrival of all the birds.



Hermit-Thrush.

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