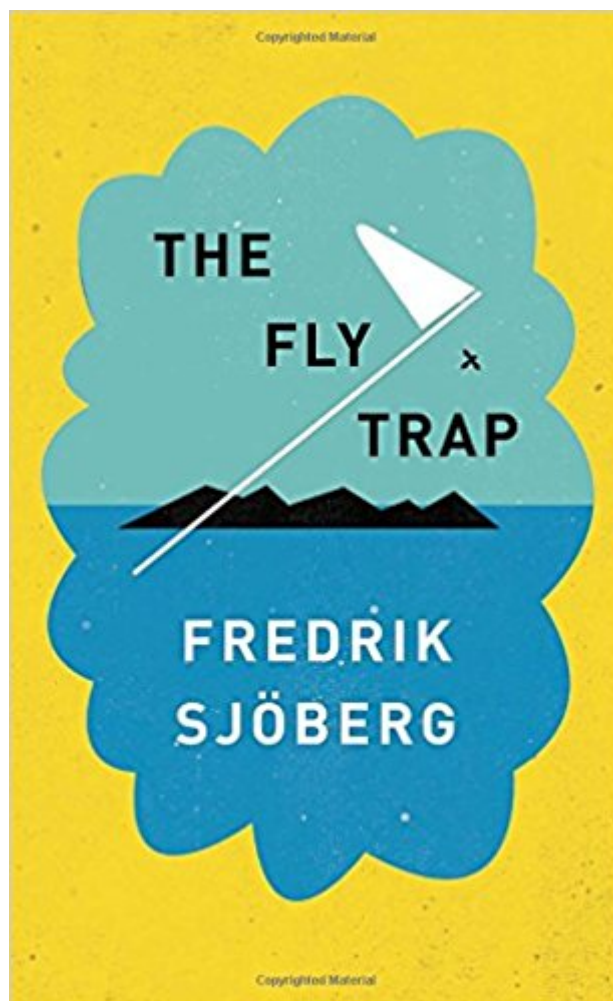


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# The Fly Trap



## Synopsis

A Nature Book of the Year (The Times (UK)) – “The hoverflies are only props. No, not only, but to some extent. Here and there, my story is about something else.” • A mesmerizing memoir of extraordinary brilliance by an entomologist, *The Fly Trap* chronicles Fredrik Sjöberg’s life collecting hoverflies on a remote island in Sweden. Warm and humorous, self-deprecating and contemplative, and a major best seller in its native country, *The Fly Trap* is a meditation on the unexpected beauty of small things and an exploration of the history of entomology itself. • What drives the obsessive curiosity of collectors to catalog their finds? What is the importance of the hoverfly? As confounded by his unusual vocation as anyone, Sjöberg reflects on a range of ideas – the passage of time, art, lost loves – drawing on sources as disparate as D. H. Lawrence and the fascinating and nearly forgotten naturalist René-Edmond Malaise. From the wilderness of Kamchatka to the loneliness of the Swedish isle he calls home, Sjöberg revels in the wonder of the natural world and leaves behind a trail of memorable images and stories.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A New York Times Notable Book of 2015 – “A badass Swede you’ve never heard of. . . . One of my favorite books of this year was – The Fly Trap, by the writer and entomologist Fredrik Sjöberg, who appears to be the Geoff Dyer of Sweden: funny, astute, intellectually voracious, simultaneously self-absorbed and self-critical.” • – Kathryn

Schulz, *The New Yorker*, "The Best Facts I Learned from Books in 2015" "Fredrik Sj  berg is like the Karl Ove Knausgaard of entomology . . . completely charming . . . his real focus is the human imperative to find meaning in daily experience. It's a subject he approaches in a wry and disarming fashion. . . . But *The Fly Trap* isn't just a series of artful ruminations on the timeless quest to understand the natural world (although that would be enough, wouldn't it?). Sj  berg is a genuinely funny guy. . . . The *Fly Trap* is such an ardent, informed and sustained brief on behalf of the planet that a plea for this or that piece of green legislation seems unnecessary. The very existence of this subtle book is a powerful argument for vigilance." •Kevin Canfield, *The Daily Beast* "Seductive reading, a quirky and wide-ranging meditation on the deep pleasures of collecting, obsession and the natural world. . . . Sj  berg's forthright and unapologetic unpretentiousness is close to liberating in an age when nature writing is so often quasi-theological, veering routinely between awe and homily, sometimes even in the same sentence. . . . He has a gift for identifying fascinating and unconventional careers and rendering them in ways that bring out a deep and affecting longing, a longing for love, beauty, and connection that appears to drive not only his protagonists but Sj  berg himself. . . . The straightforwardness of *The Fly Trap* is the product of the skill of its author and the sophistication of its structure. Somehow, Sj  berg carries you along on his many excursions and detours, always interesting but often only loosely associative, maintaining the momentum, pulling together a digressive skein of stories across centuries and continents, gently but determinedly insisting by example that calm, patience, good humor, care, and attention and open-mindedness are their own rewards." •Hugh Raffles, *The New York Times Book Review* "Entertaining . . . whimsical . . . rich . . . iconoclastic . . . brilliant." •Richard Conniff, *Wall Street Journal* "Write brilliantly and readers will follow you anywhere—even into a swarm of hoverflies. That's one takeaway from *The Fly Trap*, a charming, off-the-beaten track, humorously self-deprecating memoir by Fredrik Sj  berg, a biologist who muses and amuses about his baffling passion for hoverflies . . . a paean to some of the tiniest wonders of the natural world, but even more to the benefits of intense focus . . . filled with delightful observations . . . The *Fly Trap* stands as proof that great writing can lend a buzz . . . to even the most unlikely subjects." •Heller McAlpin, *NPR* "In sharing the experience of solitude and reflection, Sj  berg invites readers to see through his eyes, in language that is often poetic, sometimes inscrutable." •Kirkus Reviews "A memoir that reads like summer trapped within the pages of a warm and nourishing book. . . . Although the details about hoverflies

are endlessly fascinating, what really elevates this book is Sj  f  berg's promise to have his memoir concentrate on his two-pronged mission:   to say something about the art and sometimes the bliss of limitation. And the legibility of landscape.  

  Poornima Apte, BookBrowse.com (5 Stars, Editor's Choice)   "A rare masterpiece . . . graceful, poetic, astonishing and   yes!   absolutely thrilling.  

  Jyllands-Posten (Denmark)   "Full of charm, the insects are almost incidental; . . . it  s really a book about how to find meaning in life.  

  Melissa Harrison, The Times (UK) (a Nature Book of the Year)   "Sj  f  berg traces a sort of erratic flight path of ideas and associations, at once whimsical and yet laden with erudition and a deep feeling for the natural world and our place in it.  

  Carl Wilkinson, The Financial Times (UK)   "[Sj  f  berg] writes with infectious passion.  

  Paul Binding, The Independent (UK)   "An intriguing defence of the selfish, even hedonistic pleasures of natural history. Thomas Teal  s translation captures Sj  f  berg  s quiet, hypnotic style, his deadpan jokes.  

  Jennie Erin Smith, The Times Literary Supplement (UK)   "Wry, digressive and packed with fantastically clipped observations.  

  Patrick Barkham, The Guardian (UK)   "I often return to *The Fly Trap*, it remains close to my heart. The minute observations from nature reveal sudden insights into one  s life. Sometimes I almost think that he wrote it for me.  

  Tomas Transtr  mer, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature

Fredrik Sj  f  berg is an entomologist and lives with his family on the island of Runmar  , in the archipelago east of Stockholm. He is also a literary critic, translator, cultural columnist and the author of several books.

I bought this book based on a review in the Wall Street Journal, and, suffice it to say, it's not at all what I expected. The author lives on a small Swedish island where he pursues and collects hoverflies, and, ostensibly, that's what the book is about. But it's really much, much more, because the author has a penchant for writing about ancillary subjects, and he does it really well. The hoverfly is kind of the common thread through the whole book, but there's history, romance, humor, and other things woven in there, too. The author writes well, and I enjoyed the book a lot.

The trap catches more than flies! I will not divulge the secret of this book...however, it is best to think of this as a book about how we make islands, how we think or do not think about the

inter-relatedness (is there such as word) of all species of plant and animals, and how we are both observers and participants in this interplay whether we want to be or not. Fun book...pleasurable reading...you can take this as deep as you want to go or just skim the surface...I really liked the book. Get a signed copy if you can.

I'm thoroughly caught in Sjöberg's trap. What an enchanting discourse on the pleasures of investigation and discovery. He illuminates the particular joy of studying a "language" (in this case, the grammar, syntax, and expression metaphorically represented by every detail of the hover fly, his speciality). What a treat to find stories within the story, an account of another entomologist, Renee Malaise, that ties into the author's own pursuits and leads to an art heist. Who knew that a book about flies could be so riveting?

How very odd, this book. Entomology has always been about as interesting as beans to me but this book is not really about collecting insects even though it occupies much of the content. It is more about searching for meaning and making sense in a disorderly world.

This is a surprisingly engaging and fun read. The author has a great wry sense of humor. I would never have bought this except it was recommended to me and now I'm glad I did (our library does not have any copies). It's much more about life and what engages us as adults than it is about hoverflies. His account of other Swedish adventurers in the 19th-20th centuries is especially entertaining. His personal library must set a high-water mark for obscure titles. I'd like to understand how the author made even a subsistence living prior to writing books.

This book was captivating. Now I'm saving for a vacation to see the nature in this book!

Not a fan. I wanted to be a fan, but I admit this book just never really grabbed me.

I read the Fly Trap for a book club read. It was one of the most difficult books ever to finish. Full of scientific terms, oddball scientists, expeditions and collections, it was boring. There were a few snippets of sarcasm to ease the pain of reading this book

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