



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA
COMMON READ/
COMMON WORLD



Photo by William DeShazer

MEET THE AUTHOR

SO MUCH BEAUTY IN DIRT

A self-described backyard naturalist, **MARGARET RENKL** is the author of three books of creative non-fiction and a collection of poetry, as well as a frequent columnist to *The New York Times*. In *Late Migrations* (2019), Renkl weaves a touching tapestry of childhood memories from rural Alabama with poetic reflections on nature, drawn from close observations in her suburban Nashville backyard. Addressing topics ranging from climate change and bird migrations to mental health struggles, Renkl's short essays emphasize how a deeper awareness of the natural world can enrich our humanity and strengthen our bond with nature as well as attachments to each other.

HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE
WHAT RENKL DESCRIBES AS THE
VIRTUES OF ASTONISHMENT?
DO YOU AGREE WITH HER ASSESSMENT
OF ITS CREATIVE POWERS?

"I grew up in the woods, and all my life I've turned to woodland paths when the world is too much with me, but I am no scientist. It took a lot of nerve for someone so ignorant of true wilderness to fashion herself as a nature writer but the flipside of ignorance is astonishment, and I am good at astonishment."

DO WE CURRENTLY LACK A LEVEL OF
ASTONISHMENT AS A CULTURE?
WHAT WOULD BE THE RESULT OF SUCH
A CULTURAL SHIFT?

LATE MIGRATIONS

A NATURAL HISTORY OF LOVE AND LOSS Margaret Renkl



"Late Migrations has the makings of an American classic." —ANN PATCHETT

USA COMMON READ/COMMON WORLD
2025/26 BOOK SELECTION:

LATE MIGRATIONS
A NATURAL HISTORY OF LOVE AND LOSS

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