

Upcoming Events

- March 19** Wandern at the Willows, 11:00am
- March 19** Library Treasure Tour—"Wonderful and Weird: The Fairy Tales Found in the Horner Memorial Library," 2:00pm
- March 20** "Wister & More" presents Trio Montage, 3:00pm
- March 22** KA EXTRA: Germany's New Government and the Stability of Democracy, 7:00pm
- April 3** Gentle Yoga, 11:00am
- April 3** Bösendorfer Youth Music Festival Concert, 3:00pm
- April 9** Buchclub: *Menschen im Hotel* by Vicki Baum, 1:30pm
- April 13** Konversationsabend: An Evening with Writer/Philosopher Richard David Precht, 6:00pm
- April 16** Wandern at the Willows, 11:00am
- April 21** "The Slave in the Parsonage: An 18th Century Fight for Freedom," a lecture by Rev. Dr. Deborah Rahn Clemens, 6pm
- April 22** Friday Film Fest, *Duell der Brüder*, 6:30pm
- April 23** Library Treasure Tour—"Home Life, City Life and the Nation: Encountering the German Ethnic Experience in the Horner Memorial Library", 2:00pm
- April 24** "Wister & More" presents the Karlsruher Konzert-Duo, 3:00pm
- May 4** KA EXTRA: Religion and War, 3:00pm
- May 11** Konversationsabend: The 251st Anniversary of Beethoven's Birthday, 6:00pm
- May 14** Buchclub: *Kleiner Mann—was nun?* By Hans Fallada, 1:30pm
- May 15** Classical Guitar meets Classic Wines, 3:00pm

THE GERMAN SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA *Friday Film Fest Series*



Das geheime Leben der Bäume

Directed by Jörg Adolph

March 18, 2022

• 6:30 PM •

Film, Food & Discussion

The German Society of Pennsylvania

611 Spring Garden St.

Philadelphia, PA 19123

Support provided in part by the
Philadelphia Cultural Fund.



Das geheime Leben der Bäume (2020)

Director: Jörg Adolph
Producer: Friederich Oetker
Martin Moszkowicz
Camera: Jan Haft
Musik: Franziska Henke
Starring: Peter Wohlleben
Genre: Documentary
Production: Constatin Film
Length: 96 min.
Language: German with German subtitles



Based on the bestseller by Peter Wohlleben: *Das geheime Leben der Bäume. Was sie fühlen, wie sie kommunizieren – die Entdeckung einer verborgenen Welt.* Heyne Verlag, München 2015 (Taschenbuchausgabe 2020).

Commentary by Karl Moehlmann

Peter Wohlleben – Nomen est Omen



Peter Wohlleben

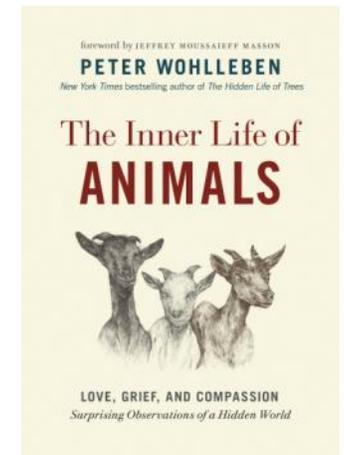
Peter Wohlleben was born in 1964 in Bonn, West Germany where he spent the first years of his life. His family then moved to Sinzig am Rhein where he grew up. He had already decided at the age of six to become a nature conservationist. He studied at the Fachhochschule für Forstwirtschaft in Rottenburg am Neckar. After his graduation in 1987, he worked for two decades as a civil servant in the Rhineland-Palatinate State Forestry Administration. After a few years

as Office Manager, he was transferred to oversee the forests of two small Eifel communities. But in 2006, he quit the state forestry because his unorthodox views on forest management and nature conservation clashed with the official state policies. Today he runs an environmentally friendly municipal piece of woodland in the village of Hümmel/Wershofen near Ahrweiler in the Eifel region of Rhineland-Palatinate. He offers regular tours at his forest academy.

Wohlleben started writing books about his views on ecology and forest management in 2007. His national and international breakthrough as a writer came in 2015 when he published his book, *The Hidden Life Of Trees*, which shot to #1 on the *Spiegel* bestseller list for non-fiction books. It remained at the top of *Sachbuch-Bestsellerlisten* for three years and has been translated into 20 languages. Wohlleben, who is married and has two children, uses his success as a writer to go on lecture tours throughout Germany and other countries to promote the preservation, protection and well-being of forests, just like his last name so conveniently suggests.

Other publications:

- *The Inner Life of Animals: Love, Grief, and Compassion: Surprising Observations of a Hidden World* ([Greystone Books](#), 2016)
- *The Secret Wisdom of Nature: Trees, Animals, and the Extraordinary Balance of All Living Things — Stories from Science and Observation* ([Greystone Books](#), 2017)
- *Can You Hear the Trees Talking?: Discovering The Hidden Life of the Forest* (Greystone Kids, 2019)
- *Peter and the Tree Children* (Greystone Kids, 2020)



Wood Wide Web

Wohlleben's main thesis is that trees are interlinked through their root systems through which they share nourishment (*Zuckerlösungen*) with other trees. And then there are the vast fungal networks whose fibers penetrate the ground and create a web of unimaginable density as scientists discovered in the Harz mountains. Through these "secret" subterranean links, the fungi transfer signals from tree to tree and help them to exchange information about insects, droughts, and other dangers. Mushrooms, therefore, act like the fiber optic lines of the internet, enabling trees to communicate and help each other.

Unlike single trees, the so called "Wood Wide Web" in an undisturbed forest can create an ecosystem that protects against "*Schädlinge*" of all kinds, soften the effect of extreme heat or cold, store water, create moisture in the air, and feed the young seedlings for a long time until it is their turn to fill any gaps. Wohlleben noticed, for example, that a moss-covered stone he found was actually an old tree stump that was kept alive by surrounding trees despite not having leaves anymore. Arcadia trees in the African savannah use toxins when giraffes eat their leaves, communicating this danger to other trees through their fungal network so that they can preemptively produce giraffe repellents in their leaves.

Trees in a forest, therefore, are *soziale Wesen* who provide *Nachbarschaftshilfe im Notfall* and thus are able to stay alive and become *uralt* only in the *Gemeinschaft* of other trees of their kind. When Wohlleben uses verbs or terms like *fühlen, hören, kommunizieren, Schmerz empfinden*, or *soziale Wesen* and *stillen des Nachwuchses*, he is purposely describing the trees' characters and behaviors in anthropomorphic terms. Wohlleben's statements have elicited sharp criticism from scientists and other forest experts. Andrea Polle, the head of the chair for forest botany at the University of Göttingen, denies that trees have a brain or a conscience and are able to think. "*Dass die Pflanzenzellen auf Reize reagieren, sei ein generelles Kennzeichen des Lebendigen. Ein Gehirn, vergleichbar dem höher entwickelter Tiere, wie es*

Wohlleben an mehreren Stellen seines Buches vermutet, haben Pflanzen demnach nicht."

Torsten Halbe, a biologist, countered Wohlleben with his own book, *Das wahre Leben der Bäume*. He accuses Wohlleben of trying to promote political goals with false presentations. "*Mit der Vermenschlichung von Pflanzen will er das Verständnis erzeugen, dass Baumfällen böse ist, Mord quasi-ganz einfach und moralisch. Wer dann noch einen Baum fällen will, erscheint quasi naturgemäß als Unmensch, dessen Argumentation sich von vornherein disqualifizieren lässt.*"



Torsten Halbe

They all agree, though, that Wohlleben's unprecedented popularity and his criticism of the state forestry with its clear cutting, heavy machinery, and insecticides could help to promote a more sustainable treatment of *Wälder* in Germany and forests worldwide.

Der Film

This documentary is based on Wohlleben's bestseller. Multiple excerpts from his book are narrated, wherein Wohlleben outlines his philosophy of ancient natural woods with their super organism. We also see him at a book fair giving autographs of his book. A trip to Poland to promote his book includes a visit to a forest that hasn't been touched for 100 years. He explains the "social" aspects of trees in forest tours at his *Waldakademie* of Hümmel. His sharp criticism of the forest industry is illustrated with scenes of clear cutting and use of heavy machinery and modern tree harvesters. Because of their weight, they destroy the ability of the forest ground to absorb and store moisture. In contrast, we see *Holzfäller* cut down trees in Wohlleben's home forest by hand, and horses log the trees the old fashioned and more sustainable way.



Old Tjikko

Wohlleben travels to Sweden to see the world's oldest tree, "Old Tjikko" which has been estimated at almost 10,000 years old. He participates in the protest of the planned destruction of the Hambacher Forest, which is an ancient forest near Buir in North Rhine-Westfalia between Cologne and Aachen. It was planned to be cleared for open pit coal mining by the RWE energy company, sparking angry protests by environmentalists and local residents. He journeys to Vancouver Island in Canada, where he shares his

views of old growth forests with the few surviving members of the Kwiakah First Nation. The movie ends in Brandenburg, where he surveys the remnants of a forest fire and discusses the efforts by the state forestry to replant and restore the devastated *Kiefernwüste*.



Aftermath of forest fire in Brandenburg

Both the book and the movie of the "*bekannteste Förster Deutschlands*" are wonderful sources of information that could help the reader or viewer to discover "*die unzähligen Wunder unserer wichtigen Wälder*".

7/22/21: Wohlleben zur Flutkatastrophe in der Eifel: "*Viele unserer Wälder sind grüne Wüsten. Ein intakter Wald könnte auch grosse Wassermassen wegstecken.*"

NEXT MONTH:

Das Duell der Brüder (2016)

April 22, 2022

German with English Subtitles

This movie is the biography of the life, success, and separation of the brothers Adolf and Rudolf Dassler, who pioneer a sport shoe company in the small town of Herzogenaurach near Nürnberg in the 1920s. In 1948 they separate and form competing companies that develop into two of the most successful brands in the world, namely Adidas and Puma. What were the reasons behind the bitter infighting and eventual split of the two brothers who worked together so well in the beginning? Did the draft issue at the beginning of the Second World War - when Rudolf had to serve in the army while Adolf stayed at home as the head of their company - cause the rift? Or was it the alleged infidelity of Rudolf and Adolf's wife that ultimately broke their ties? The film tries to find some answers to this most famous family feud and break-up.

