



# The Energy of Nature

By E. C. Pielou

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## The Energy of Nature By E. C. Pielou

Energy is crucial for events of every kind, in this world or any other. Without energy, nothing would ever happen. Nothing would move and there would be no life. The sun wouldn't shine, winds wouldn't blow, rivers wouldn't flow, trees wouldn't grow, birds wouldn't fly, and fish wouldn't swim; indeed no material object, living or dead, could even exist. In spite of all this, energy is seldom considered a part of what we call "nature."

In *The Energy of Nature*, E. C. Pielou explores energy's role in nature—how and where it originates, what it does, and what becomes of it. Drawing on a wide range of scientific disciplines, from physics, chemistry, and biology to all the earth sciences, as well as on her own lifelong experience as a naturalist, Pielou opens our eyes to the myriad ways energy and its transfer affect the earth and its inhabitants. Along the way we learn how energy is delivered to the earth from the sun; how it causes weather, winds, and tides; how it shapes the earth through mountain building and erosion; how it is captured and used by living things; how it is stored in chemical bonds; how nuclear energy is released; how it heats the unseen depths of the planet and is explosively revealed in the turmoil of earthquakes and volcanoes; how energy manifests itself in magnetism and electromagnetic waves; how we harness it to fuel human societies; and much more.

Filled with fascinating information and and helpful illustrations (hand drawn by the author), *The Energy of Nature* is fun, readable, and instructive. Science buffs of all ages will be delighted.

“A luminous, inquiring, and thoughtful exploration of Earth’s energetics.”—Jocelyn McDowell, *Discovery*

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## Editorial Review

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Changing constantly, the protean forms of energy tend to be fugitives from observation compared to the visible, tangible features of Earth's environment. In this descriptive tour of energy on Earth, its sources, transmutations, and dissipations, Pielou adopts a style of graceful perceptiveness familiar to readers of her *Fresh Water* (1998). Conversion is the leitmotif of the energy story, and following the forms that energy assumes carries Pielou through the arenas in which the change occurs, such as the atmosphere, the land and sea surfaces, the oceans, biota, and Earth's interior. Except for a tiny fraction generated by radioactive decay and gravitational contraction in the core, solar radiation provides all of Earth's energy. Its passage through the atmosphere to the surface initiates the thermal, kinetic, and potential energy (the energy stored in objects liable to falling) drives wind and currents, further stirred up by friction and the Coriolis effect. Pielou incorporates easy arithmetic that conveys the scale of these interactive processes and deepens the understanding an attentive observer will derive from her guidance. *Gilbert Taylor*

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From the Inside Flap

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About the Author

**E. C. Pielou**, a former professor of mathematical ecology and Killam Professor at Dalhousie University, has been a naturalist all her life. She is the author of many books, most recently *Fresh Water*, *A Naturalist's Guide to the Arctic*, and *After the Ice Age*, all published by the University of Chicago Press.

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