

Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

Issue: October 15, 2022

The Big Dreams of Small Creatures.

By Gail Lerner

Oct. 2022. 368p. Penguin/Nancy Paulsen, \$18.99 (9780593407851). Gr. 4–7

After Eden saves a wasp nest from destruction, she discovers she can communicate with the grateful wasp queen. It's revealed that insects have been attempting to speak with humans for centuries, but people tend to shoo (or squish) bugs in their vicinity. There are rumors of an institute built to further human-insect coexistence, but it's unclear if it actually exists. Meanwhile, young August is a self-declared insect enemy due to a series of unfortunate run-ins, and after declaring war on the six-legged kingdom, he gets wind of a hidden storehouse of a deadly pesticide. Both Eden and August go on the hunt for these rumored locations, putting them on course to intersect in the strangest of places. They'll realize that they need other people—and insects—to become the best version of themselves. Lerner's entertaining, unconventional novel sees humans and insects share narration duties, allowing for a wide range of perspectives, deep empathy, and a marvelous sense of humor. An inventive, endearing story that will make an entomologist and environmental activist out of anyone.

— *Emily Graham*