

Moss Safari: Exploring the Secret Life in Moss

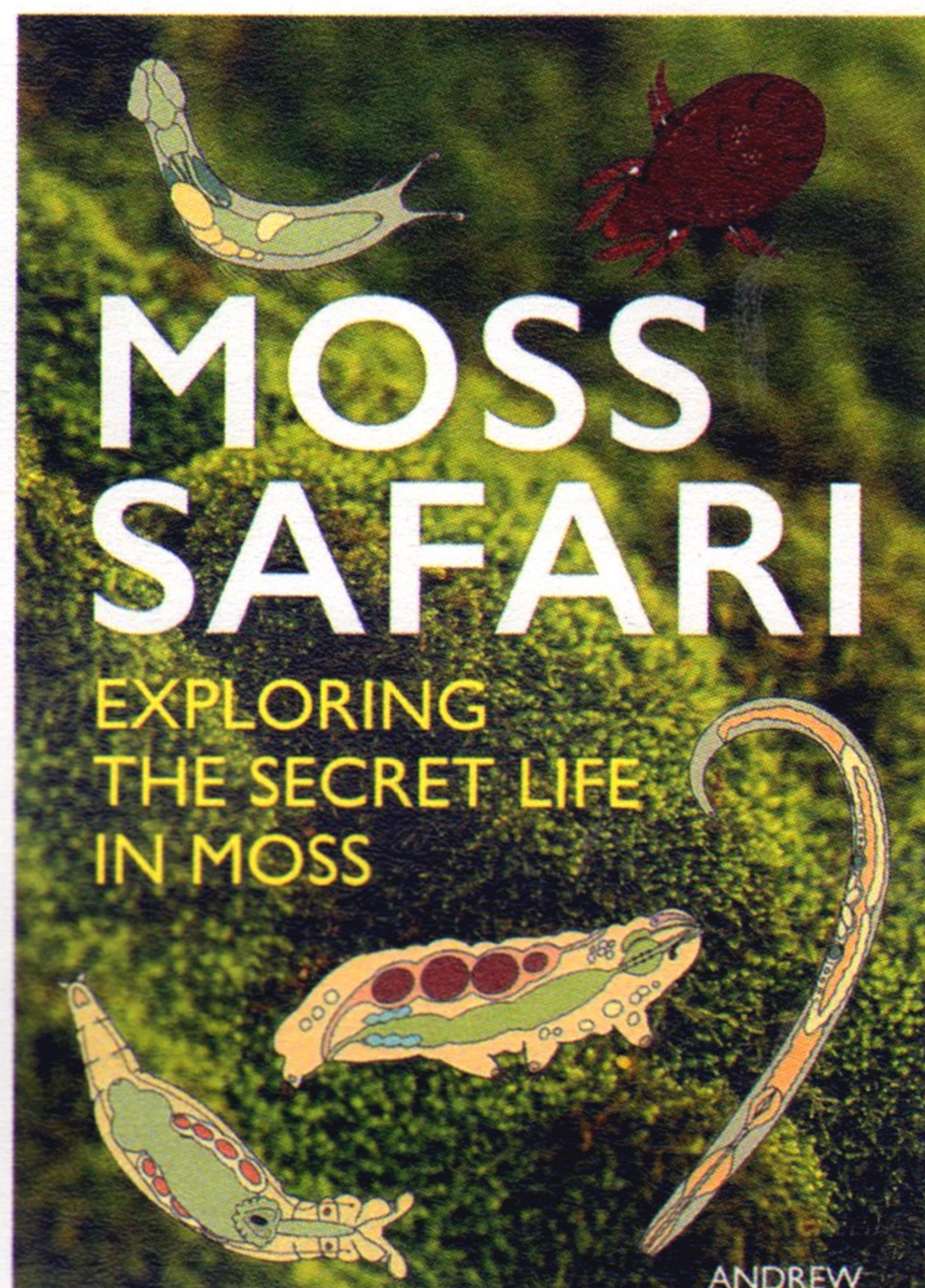
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An engaging
and accessible
introduction to moss

microscopy, *Moss Safari* opens up a hidden world of life while serving as a valuable starting point for both independent exploration and classroom learning.

Moss Safari is a scholarly introduction to amateur microscopy, and its enthusiastic writing captures the imagination of anyone who has never thought to explore something so abundant, so simple, yet so productive. Moss is an ecosystem: squish some



water from a cushion of moss into a dish and there you have it—a world of its own. In this sense, it also lends itself well to classroom use, offering an accessible and hands-on way to introduce students to microscopy, biodiversity and the hidden complexity of everyday environments.

Chandler-Grevatt singles out his Big Five: mites, nematodes, rotifers, tardigrades and gastrotrichs. None, you'll note, are microbes; they are all multicellular. The single-celled organisms come later, including diatoms and desmids, amoebae and chlorophytes, ciliates and cyanophytes. In each case, the descriptions are precise and informative. Some are underplayed; for example, the testate amoebae are dropped into the text without much being said of their astonishing abilities.

This is intended as a visual feast, though the illustrations are somewhat uneven. The micrographs are typical of what an amateur might capture—arguably a deliberate and inclusive choice that aligns with the book's aim of engaging young microscopists, showing them that such discoveries are within reach. That said, many online microscopists produce far more detailed and striking images, which could offer novices a clearer benchmark to aspire to. Some of the line drawings, meanwhile, are stiff and simplistic.

The pleasant surprises? The section on contaminants—from air bubbles and debris to slide damage and fibres—is excellent and comprehensive. Anything missing? Just one: the book includes a leaflet image of moss and mentions Robert Hooke. In fact, the first published image of living cells, by Hooke in 1665, was of a moss leaflet—predating his more famous illustration of cork.

Microscopy, then, began with moss, and here is a contemporary book revealing what else inhabits such an everyday specimen. Read it, learn from it, and use it as a springboard—whether in the classroom or at home—to explore these hidden worlds.

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