

Biologist and author Rob Dunn to deliver the Starr Lecture on this year's freshman common reading, *The Wild Life of Our Bodies*, September 12, 2016

This year's freshman common reading selection, *The Wild Life of Our Bodies: Predators, Parasites, and Partners That Shape Who We Are Today*, is biologist Rob Dunn's exploration of the long-term relationship humans have had with other species and how changes in those relationships are affecting human health and well being. Dunn will deliver this year's William Starr Lecture, which is traditionally given by the author of the common reading selection. The talk will be held on Monday, September 12, 5:30pm, in the Villard Room of Main Building. This event is free and open to the public.

"The book addresses a variety of topics, from the parasites in our guts to the snakes that threatened our early ancestors, in order to underscore human evolution's enduring influence on our behavior," says Susan Zlotnick, professor of English. "It also ranges across a variety of disciplines, including immunology, primatology and psychology, as it lays out the often devastating consequences for our bodies of our disconnection from the natural world."

Dunn's writing has appeared in *Natural History*, *BBC Wildlife Magazine*, *Scientific American*, *Smithsonian Magazine*, *National Geographic* and other magazines. His first book, *Every Living Thing*, was awarded the National Outdoor Book Award for Natural History writing. He is a professor of applied ecology at North Carolina State University. In conjunction with this event, Richard Jones of the Earth Science Department has created a "bioart" installation inspired by Dunn's book. The installation, "20/20 Biome," will feature the microbes of Vassar's freshman class cultured on individual petri dishes and then displayed—stained glass style—in a window of the Bridge for Laboratory Sciences building. "The installation will be a unique visualization of the freshman class," says Zlotnick. A reception, sponsored by the Creative Arts Across Disciplines initiative, will be held to celebrate "20/20 Biome" prior to Dunn's talk at 4:00pm on September 12.

The Starr Lecture is sponsored by the Office of the Dean of the Faculty, the Freshman Writing Seminar Program, and the Vassar First-Year Program.

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Directions to the Vassar campus, located at 124 Raymond Avenue in Poughkeepsie, NY, are available at www.vassar.edu/directions.

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