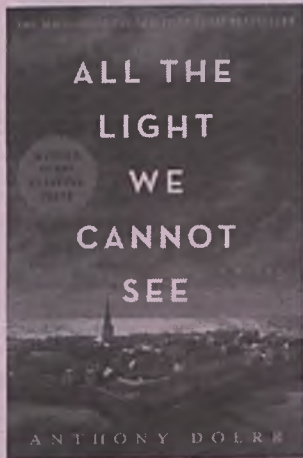


## Book Talk

*All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr  
Scribner, 2014

Reviewed by Ken Wilkins

### Keep your eyes open



Saint-Malo is a small town in the French region of Brittany, on the English Channel. Its old walled city was almost totally destroyed at the end of World War II by American bombing and English shelling. Anthony Doerr uses this historical fact that most of us have never heard of as the basis and setting for his excellent novel *All the Light We Cannot See*. This is the story of two participants in the war, a young French girl who ends up playing a small role in the resistance; and a young German soldier with a knack for radios.

Marie-Laure LeBlanc and her father, Daniel, live in Paris, where he works as the keeper of the locks for the National Museum of Natural History. Marie-Laure has congenital cataracts, and goes blind at an early age.

Her mother died giving birth to her, and some say the family must be cursed. Her father patiently teaches her how to navigate a world without light, and after many bumps and bruises she finally is able to find her way, not only in their home but on the streets of Paris as well.

Werner Pfennig and his sister, Jutta, live in an orphanage in Zollverein, a coal mining complex just outside of Essen, Germany. His fate is to work in the mines, which is where his father died. His fascination with radios, however, becomes his salvation, at least from that destiny. He gets taken up by the Nazi war machine and put in a training school. At a far too young age, he ends up in a unit tasked with finding resistance units in the Soviet Union. He uses his radio knowledge and training to locate transmitters, with deadly success.

Werner, mainly under the influence of Jutta, always wonders about the system that uses him. Marie-Laure, of course, has no doubts from her firsthand experience of the cruelty of that system. Marie-Laure and her father make their way to Saint-Malo, the home of her great uncle Etienne, himself suffering badly from his service in World War I.

With that backdrop, Doerr crafts a tale that is a bit like the coal mines of Zollverein: the reader can go as deep as he or she would like. The story is interesting in itself, and we find ourselves pulling for the main characters. Beyond that, the title lends the potential for symbolism that can hardly be ignored. Marie-Laure's father is entrusted with the Sea of Flames, a diamond of immense proportions, when the Germans come to occupy Paris. He takes it with him to Saint-Malo.

So now we have light and darkness, a blind girl who can see the truth, France and Nazi Germany, and a diamond that may have a curse associated with it. Doerr's fine prose puts us there with the characters, and we find ourselves sympathetic to the plight of Werner Pfennig, even though he is a Nazi soldier. At the end, the two protagonists finally meet—and I won't give away the ending. *All the Light We Cannot See* satisfies on multiple levels.



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## Fishing & Hunting

By Richard Seale



### Other hunters and fishers

A few weeks ago, while driving down a seldom used road in Beaufort County, I chanced upon three "other fishers" playfully crossing the road. They were a threesome of otters. My guess was it was a parent and two pups. They had come out of a large canal that bordered the road, and when I stopped the truck to enjoy the scene, the larger otter led the group back into the canal. I did not have time for a photo, but it was fun to see these playful animals in the wild.

I got to thinking of all the other creatures that are 24/7 "fishers" and how much they add to our lives when we can observe them. The morning I penned this article, while enjoying a cup of coffee overlooking Bogue Sound, my eye caught a large splash. To see it at all was luck due to the wind-driven waves which were tumbling over as whitecaps. Hurriedly, I got the spotting scope on the spot where I saw the splashes. Sure enough, a small pod of dolphin was busy "herding" fish with jumps, fast turns and frequent, vigorous tail slaps. Such actions are all very much in keeping with serious fishing. The group was moving very slowly west, but making many circles, indicating they were catching a good breakfast. As if to make a point, the cackling cry of a flying kingfisher caught my attention. The bird came flying out of the canal, landed on a tree in the yard, and moments later splashed into the waters of Bogue Sound. It emerged with a nice minnow in its bill.

For us humans, this fall's run of speckled trout has been quite good. The number of boats on trailers coming early in the morning, but heading home by lunch is a good indication that the limit of four fish at 14-inch minimums is being met regularly. This is great for us human fishers, but I find pleasure as well in observing the many other fishers who share a history, in reality a survival need, to fish.

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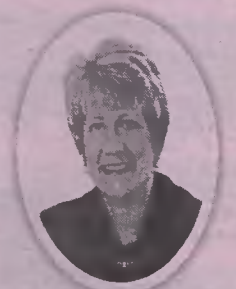
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