

# Spotlight

Friday November 24

In 1986, at the age of twenty, Christopher Knight walked into the Maine woods and didn't see another person until nearly three decades later. *The Stranger in the Woods: The Extraordinary Story of the Last True Hermit* tells the fascinating story of Christopher Knight who for twenty seven years was known only as "the Northpond hermit." Knight's isolated lifestyle was brought to end after thousands of break-ins of nearby cabins and a summer camp. The break-ins were noted for their discreetness and minimal impact. For years, Knight only broke into cabins that he knew were temporarily empty and stole only enough to get by until his next round of thefts – focusing on food, batteries, books and propane. He soon became legendary in the Northpond cabin community with some cabins being broke into so often they learned his favourite foods (lots of sugar), underwear preference (boxers not briefs), and reading tastes(classics, mysteries – never the bible).

After his arrest, Knight remained stubbornly quiet despite the flood of interest in his hermit lifestyle. Journalists came from all over the world to meet with him but he refused to speak to anyone. Dedicated to his life in the woods Knight wanted only to return to his camp. Luckily for us, one journalist managed to break through the surface just enough to compose an intriguing book delving into the life and personality of the Northpond hermit. Michael Finkel exchanged several letters with Knight before visiting him a handful of times in the Kennebec County Correctional Facility. He also spent a night each season camping in Knight's old camp location in the Maine woods. From these interviews, Finkel opened the door to Knight's life and mind a crack but no more. Much about Knight's motivations and experiences in the woods remains a mystery and he now lives a secluded life with his mom in the family home in Maine. But what Finkel managed to glean is still fascinating and he fleshes out the text with a thoughtful history of hermits throughout the ages from Christian mystics to modern day online hermit communities.

For anyone who has ever wanted to shake off the burdens of society and set up camp in the woods – this is your book.

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