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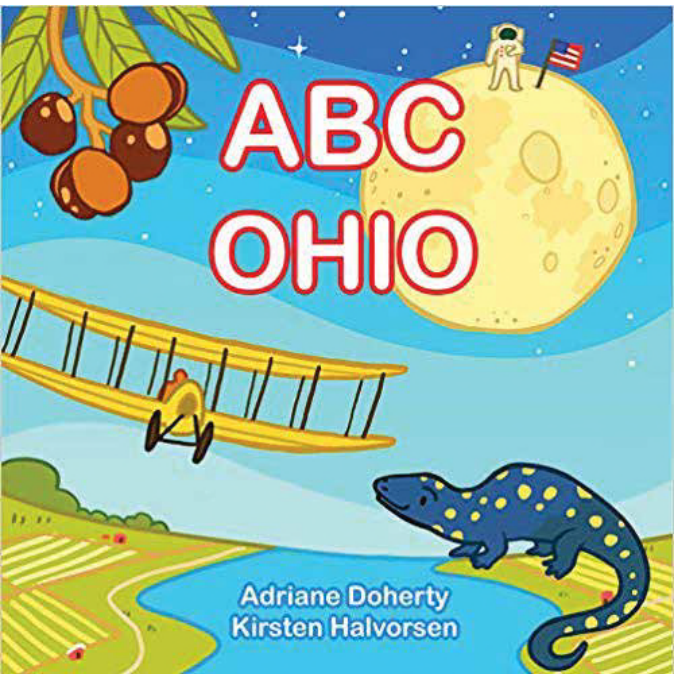
BOOKS

New release *ABC Ohio* offers a child's guide through the Buckeye State...and the alphabet

Children's author Adriane Doherty has released a new alphabet book with a decidedly Ohio feel, this time taking young readers through the heart of the Buckeye State.

Similar to Doherty's other books, *ABC Indiana* and *ABC Yellowstone*, this book helps children learn their ABCs while also developing a greater appreciation for the state's history. Featuring places like Hocking Hills, Jungle Jim's International Market, and Put-In-Bay unique only to the Buckeye State, *ABC Ohio* will feel fresh and exciting to Ohio natives and lovers alike.

As an added bonus, each page



content," says Doherty, whose latest title was released through Rubber Ducky Press.

Each landmark is vibrantly displayed with hand-drawn illustrations by Kirsten Halvorsen that promise children will have a blast learning about the places that make Ohio special.

Doherty is a mother of three children, two girls and a boy. Her love for children led her to write books to help young minds grow and understand the places

around them. Born and raised in Indiana, Doherty has travelled extensively across the Midwest, including the Buckeye state.

Captain Blue on the Blue Blazes chronicles one man's adventure as first to solo thru-hike the Buckeye Trail

By Patty Hillis Carro

Ohio's Buckeye Trail winds across 1,444 miles of dirt and bike paths, city streets, rural roads, forests and pastures – all ostensibly marked by painted "blue blazes" to guide the way. Unlike the Appalachian and Pacific Crest Trails on the east and west coasts, respectively, which meander vertically from end to end, the Buckeye Trail is a loop approximating the perimeter of Ohio. If you start in Dayton, you can plan a hike that finishes in Dayton. That is exactly what adventurer Andy Niekamp did over 88 challenging days in the spring of 2011. In so doing, he became the first to complete a solo thru-hike of the Buckeye Trail at its current length of 1,444 miles. What's more, "Captain Blue," as he became known on the trail, chronicled his daily progress via a blog that eventually became a 196-page book: *Captain Blue on the Blue Blazes*. It is a marvelous account of one man's journey in the Buckeye State.

Neatly divided into segments noting the calendar date, day on the trail, location, and miles hiked, the book is filled with "insider" knowledge and details that even the novice hiker or armchair traveler will find fascinating. Niekamp's writing style is concise and straightforward. As he gains his "trail legs" with each successive mile, so too does he find a good pace for his story. In these pages, we meet a man who is dogged, determined, and dedicated to the unknown adventures awaiting him each day. Along with his



Andy Niekamp

who appear with water or protein bar or words of encouragement at the exact moments they are most needed. As Niekamp notes, hiking the Buckeye Trail is a more solitary experience than say, the Appalachian Trail (which he has now completed four times) because other hikers are rarely encountered. Except for those times when he gratefully welcomes a fellow hiker as company, Niekamp is alone in his quest, aware that many sections of the trail are isolated, or poorly marked, or in need of basic maintenance to allow progress to the day's destination.

Along the Buckeye Trail, the reader comes to understand what it means to be a solo hiker. He or she is treated to a view of Ohio that is refreshing in its simplicity. A hike, by its very nature, is a slowed-down effort to connect with the elements – air, water, earth. Niekamp connects with those elements, and readers, by reflecting about what compels him to head outdoors on a regular basis, leaving behind the life of an information technology professional to embrace whatever might be over the next horizon.

Niekamp has accomplished two remarkable feats: thru-hiking the Buckeye Trail, and writing an informative, entertaining book about his unique experiences and outlook. In the future, "Captain Blue" may find that he has inspired others to join him on the Buckeye Trail. No doubt, this founder and organizer of the hugely popular Dayton Hikers organization will welcome the company.

grit, he has packed a fine sense of humor to help him cope with the unexpected, whether it be parts of the trail that have been deliberately obscured by landowners, boot-sucking miles of mud that impede progress, or strangers who mistake him for a down-on-his-luck, homeless vagrant.

As the miles begin to accumulate, Niekamp finds a new affection for his home state, despite conditions that would cause most sensible people to hang up their boots and call it quits. Icy rain and subfreezing temperatures alternate with heat and humidity in a perplexing variety of meteorological patterns. Native and transplanted Ohioans recognize the phenomenon simply as "Ohio in the spring." Niekamp conquers the elements, at least most of the time, relying on his expertise gained over years of trekking. Helping him are family, friends, and "trail angels"