

12 books of Christmas: A roundup of titles to suit anyone on your shopping list

The nerd

Hey look, no offense intended. I *am* one, OK? Thus you can trust me when I tell you that a major nerd preoccupation involves the question of whether there is life on other planets.

Author Chris Impey avoids the “little green men” nonsense and presents a sober overview called ***The Living Cosmos: Our Search for Life in the Universe* (393 pages; Random House; \$27.95)**. An astronomy professor at the University of Arizona, Impey also knows how to cut through the heavy science and write a readable text for laymen.

- John Mark Eberhart, The Kansas City Star