
This is a fine and timely book. Never angry, seldom even disappointed, it is simply full of bright, right ideas. It features stories of proactive “doers,” not doomsayers; not dark tales of the myriad environmental “takers,” but uplifting stories of the enlightened few caretakers. It should be inspirational for a wide range of readers: politicians, managers, advocates for open lands, experiential educators. It is not quite a scientific book, although numerous social and natural scientists are quoted. More anecdotal and philosophical than hypothesis-testing, it stil is data-driven—the data being the anecdotes of others and Louv’s own experiences afield.

The driving message of this extended essay is that meaningful connection to nature is fundamental to human “spirit” and survival, both for us as individuals and for humanity as a species. Louv’s broad but cogent definition of “nature” has a personal, human context: “Human beings exist in nature anywhere they experience meaningful kinship with other species. By this description, a natural environment may be found in wilderness or in a city; while not required to be pristine this nature is influenced at least as much by a modicum of wildness and weather as by developments… We know this nature when we see it.” (p. 52).

Louv sees a personal relationship with nature as a necessity. He notes that experience in natural places—whatever their scale—often requires “overcoming place blindness” (p. 100) and the notion that nature is elsewhere. I was reminded of Louis Agassiz’s famous response to a query as to where he’d spent his summer holiday; he had gotten just halfway across his backyard, because there was so much there to see.

Louv recounts hundreds of success stories—not the landscape-level conservation successes of NGOs and enlightened governments that are visible from space, but the little victories of local conservation heroes that sum to a hopeful vision. One of the more hopeful observations of the book may be generational changes in attitudes and actions. Based on findings by EcoAmerica, Louv describes three broad generational phases in environmental concern and context. In the 1960s the focus was on impending catastrophe. The next generation got “green jobs.” The present generation “will give added focus to the intrinsic importance of the natural world to our health, our ability to learn, our happiness, our spirit” (p. 184). If those changed values can scale to global stewardship, I’m glad to hand off to that new generation.

Why is this book pertinent to conservation biology? Louv describes the critical social context of conservation. If applied conservation biologists all knew what Louv knows we might be more likely to succeed. We are all in the people business. We people are the problem, so we are the solution.

I grew up with amazing new images of Earth from space and Adlai Stevenson’s metaphor of “Spaceship Earth,” but mindful that no technological image could do justice to the remarkable cosmic accident that is Earth. Louv’s book—focused as it is on personal scales of inspiration and influence—could encourage some of our fellow passengers to recognize the opportunity of the evolving “experiment” that is Earth. More important, it could encourage those already attuned to the wonders of nature to share the news with their neighbors.

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There is a sagacious saying that can be applied to insects and their relatives: “you can’t live with them (e.g. as vectors of disease, pests of man, animals and agriculture, and general nuisance), you can’t live without them (for pollination, decomposition, and as major components of food chains).” Human/insect encounters with some of the more than one million species of scientifically described insects cannot be avoided. Now there is available an edited collection of papers that examines the human dimensions of trying to coexist with insects, rather than trying to destroy them. This book is divided into four sections and nineteen separate chapters or case studies written by twenty-nine authors. These chapters provide a lucid interdisciplinary viewpoint on the incredible range of human/insect happenstances. Part I of the book consists of six contributions under the broad title “Human Insect Encounters.” Part II includes four separate papers on “Insects and Leisure.” Part III treats “Insects and Tourism” and includes discussions of butterfly pavilions and insect festivals. Part IV, “Conservation Frontiers,” considers a wide range of ideas to increase appreciation, understanding, respect and protection for insects. Additionally, the editor provides a concluding chapter. As a bonus, I found the literature citations for each chapter to be extremely valuable for anyone interested in entomology.

In his introduction, Dr. Lemelin states that the book was composed “in order to illustrate human-insect interactions from historical to contemporary perspectives, and highlight the