

## A Practical Guide to Environmental Impact Assessment

By Paul A. Erickson. 1994. Academic Press, Inc., San Diego. 266 pp., illus.

As humanity continues to grow and advance conflicts of interest, society versus environment, etc. will likely become more frequent. The decision makers will require a tool such as environmental impact assessment to resolve differences. Paul Erickson wrote this book with the intent it be a "conceptual guide for those who have professional responsibility for the design, management, or conduct of impact assessment" to aid the decision making process.

The author focuses on how to identify, and evaluate impacts on all interdependent variables such as the physical and social environments. The book is well organized with four main sections: principles of environmental impact assessment, the physical environment, the social environment, and issues of special concern. Examples were used throughout to

illustrate points. Procedural guidelines are also supplied. The book is not meant to furnish a complete literature listing but does provide an adequate list of further readings by chapter. The reader is also supplied with an index for quick reference.

The book deals mostly with the American situation but the information should be readily applicable to Canadian assessments. The author provides a practical guideline to the technical and scientific concepts which must be addressed during an assessment. This is a book I would highly recommend to professionals working in the field. If guidelines are followed as provided a valuable tool to aid the process for making better-informed decisions will have been provided.

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## Nature's Kindred Spirits

By James I. McClintock. 1994. The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison. 147 pp. \$23.50.

James McClintock has gathered his favourite authors on nature and conservation topics and presented them in a book which presents their truths and their lives as a review of nature topics and nature philosophy. Aldo Leopold (1877-1948), Joseph Wood Krutch (1893-1970), Edward Abbey (1927-1989), Annie Dillard (b. 1945), and Gary Snyder (b. 1930) are the writers whom he picked and whom he presents to us as the foremost thinkers and writers on nature topics in the 20th century. In general, all of the authors have a great knowledge and appreciation of the writings of Henry David Thoreau. The other common experience of the authors is the time each spent in solitary contemplation of the natural world whether wide ranging over many parts of the United States or one particular corner considering seasons, moods, and the influences past and present of ecological and human pressures.

Individually the experience and the philosophy of each author are widely divergent. Aldo Leopold was a conservationist who ranged widely over the U.S. as a forester, game management biologist, and apostate conservation bureaucrat. His sensitivities were with nature as a good in itself rather than a useful resource and he was a pioneer in thinking of nature that way. Using Leopold's writings, especially *Game Management* (1933) and *A Sand County Almanac* (1949) McClintock traces thought and themes through most of his life and work.

Edward Wood Krutch was different in thought, though borrowing heavily on Leopold as influence in

his writings. Initially a professor of English and a drama critic with ambivalent thoughts on nature, he became first an appreciative of science and then a conservationist looking beyond science to see the order and creativity of the natural world. In his earliest nature writings he described himself as a pantheist, one who finds God as nature and all which is seen and present in the world. Later he revised his theology to described himself as a metabologist believing "*that life is not completely explainable in merely physical terms and that psychological, philosophical, moral, and aesthetic questions should be discussed in connection with what we know about living creatures*" (page 53). Science was the necessary touchstone for certifying truths about the natural world but larger world views and myths of spiritual experience grew from the scientific base. Scientists and philosophers as well as ideas from English literature were all influences in Krutch's thought.

The third writer, Edward Abbey, was a writer of fiction as well as a writer of nature essays. His spirituality was that of an antagonist to theology and organized religion but with a faith system in the beauty and transcending power of the earth itself, beyond normal science. Encounters with the desert and writing about those encounters brought him his own spiritual awakenings. He describes this spirituality as being an "earthiest". As a fiction novelist, his influences about the natural world and the philosophy of nature are drawn from other fictional writers, in particular Jack London, Robinson Jeffers, and B. Traven. His works are known in particular for humour which thinly masks an outrage at people's taking the natural world for granted.



Standing opposed to the theologies of the three preceeding writers, the fourth writer which McClintock picks is Annie Dillard, a modern upper middle-class woman who is an essayist, poet and teacher. Her background is Evangelical Christian and her preference became the rituals of the Catholic Church. Not only in worship but in relation to the natural world did her habits of prayer and ritual express themselves in her wanderings near Tinker Creek, a wilderness area near her summer home. Her meditative walks there became ritual stalkings, seeing and dancing with the animals and fish which lived there. By disciplining herself to be observant she was able to see much more of the nature at her feet than simply strolling in a beautiful setting. Her philosophy also drew on the writings of the ancient Greek philosopher Heroclitus, who identified opposites of joy and pain, beauty, and grotesque as well as good and evil. It is this spirituality of seeing the natural world which sets her apart as a naturalist vocally encamped in the spirituality of organized Christianity and comfortable with reconciling that faith with comment and challenge to our views of the natural world.

Gary Snyder is the last of the group. A poet, essayist, and environmental activist who is educated in anthropology, literature, and Zen Buddhism he brings all of these studies into his thought and philosophy. His thesis is that a person who wished to become a dweller in the land must understand two basic principles, "learn the flowers" and "learn the lore". The flowers are learned with one's intellect and also with one's body, commitment, time, labour, and walking. Like Annie Dillard, he stresses that walking is a spiritual practice, meditation, of sights and changes in the land. The lore of a place is the history and wisdom which the place has accumulated, including the human history but not exclusive to

humans, for plants, rocks, and animals who dwell in the place have their lessons as well if we have the wisdom to study what they have to teach. Snyder follows the spirituality of the East which emphasizes a state of awareness and openness which is also experienced by animals, plants, and rocks, indeed the whole earth as a multi-cultural community.

McClintock begins with a quote from the prophet Ezekiel, perhaps showing us his own tradition and spirituality, "*Seemeth it a small thing unto you to have fed upon the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pasture? And to have drunk of the clear waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet?*" (Ez 34:18-19). His choice of authors shows a need to combine good conservationist principles with spirituality and a doctrine of faith. Though some of the authors would react against the notion of a theistic belief system, in fact McClintock has shown that each had carefully adopted God and structured their beliefs whether previous to their writing careers or during the course of their work. His book is not easy to read and preknowledge of a lot of English literature as well as natural history and conservation literature is necessary to fully understand what he is talking about. It is a book which is good for the amateur conservationist to pursue on a free evening and could perhaps be a reference in a course in poetry covering natural history topics (if such a course existed). The book is available in Canada but it is subject to a 20% mark-up for importing academic literature which makes the final price of \$23.50 rather steep for a small book.

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## MISCELLANEOUS

### Science in the Subarctic

By Debra Lindsay. 1993. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington. xvii+176 pp., illus. U.S. \$34.00

Subtitled *Trappers, Traders, and the Smithsonian Institution*, this book recounts the efforts of Spencer Baird, Robert Kennicott, and a network of co-operating local assistants to collect specimens of natural history along the Mackenzie River and in Alaska in the 1860s. During this time Baird, leading the Smithsonian with exemplary vision and energy, dispatched the young naturalist Kennicott and supported his endeavours.

Baird is well profiled as a collector, taxonomist, biogeographer, perceiver of the gaps in the collec-

tions of his Institution, and effective user of the governmental and military apparatus for its benefit. It was Baird who developed the standards for collecting, by a wide array of suppliers, initially in biology and by extension into anthropology. With his roots in Illinois and devotion to natural history, Kennicott operated along the Mackenzie with the approval and support of the Hudson's Bay Company and its Governor, George Simpson.

The acquisition of indigenous artifacts, and accompanying essays prepared by trader-collectors on-site, reflect both ethnological interest and outright racism. Lindsay indicates how the sources of





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