

Wild Earth

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SPRING 1991

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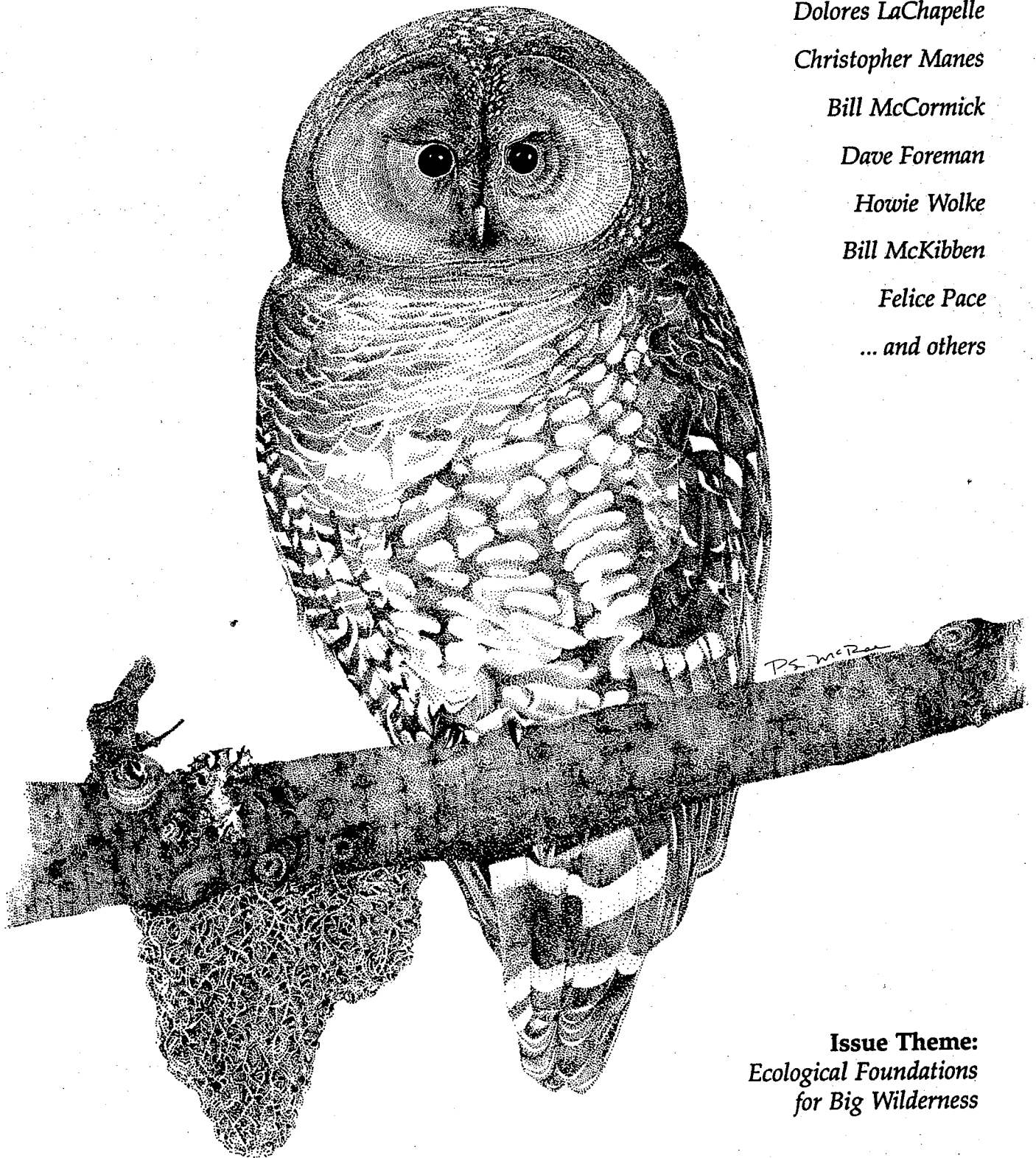
Dave Foreman

Howie Wolke

Bill McKibben

Felice Pace

... and others



Issue Theme:
*Ecological Foundations
for Big Wilderness*

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

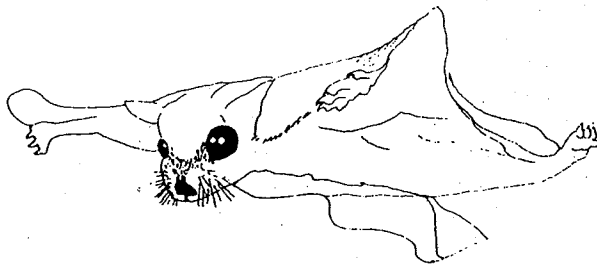
Wild Earth is a non-profit periodical serving the biocentric grassroots elements within the conservation movement, and advocating the restoration and protection of all natural elements of biodiversity. Our effort to strengthen the conservation movement involves the following:

- We shall provide a voice for the many effective but little-known regional and ad hoc wilderness groups and coalitions in North America.
- We shall serve as a networking tool for grassroots wilderness activists.
- We shall help develop and publish wilderness proposals from throughout the continent.
- We shall aim to complete, and subsequently publish in book form, a comprehensive proposal for a North American Wilderness Recovery Strategy.
- We shall render accessible the teachings of conservation biology, that activists may employ them in defense of biodiversity.
- We shall expose threats to habitat and wildlife, and offer activists means of combatting the threats.
- We shall facilitate discussion on ways to end and reverse the human population explosion.
- We will defend wilderness both as *concept* and as *place*.

PROPOSED SHORT RANGE GOALS

Wild Earth's overall goal is the restoration and protection of much—preferably at least half—of this continent as true Wilderness, with its full complement of native species and ecological processes. To this end, we suggest the following to the people and governments of this continent:

1. Protect all remaining roadless areas in North America.
2. Establish Wilderness Recovery Areas on roaded but otherwise undeveloped public lands.
3. Begin human population reduction through lowered birth rates.
4. Add to the federal or state Wilderness preservation systems large, presently-private undeveloped tracts in all bioregions.
5. Terminate commodity extraction on all undeveloped public lands and protect these lands as Wilderness or Wilderness Recovery Areas; reintroduce extirpated species as habitat permits.



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Manuscripts and drawings should be sent to John Davis, WILD EARTH, POB 492, Canton, NY 13617. Macintosh computer disks with Microsoft Word or text-only files are welcome, provided they are accompanied by paper copies. Deadlines for submissions for the second, third, and fourth issues are May 20, August 20, and November 15. Queries in advance of submission are recommended. Writers and artists who want their work returned should include a stamped, self-addressed envelope. WILD EARTH assumes no responsibility for unsolicited materials.

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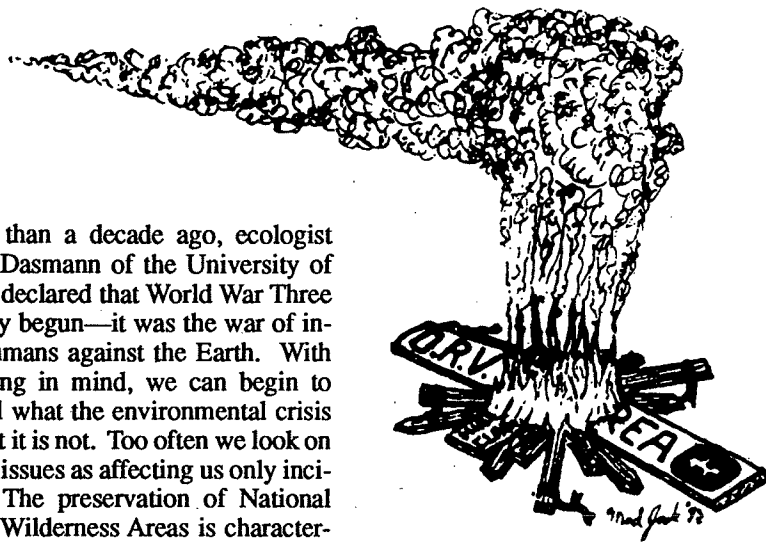
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by Peggy Sue McRae

AROUND THE CAMPFIRE



More than a decade ago, ecologist Raymond Dasmann of the University of California declared that World War Three had already begun—it was the war of industrial humans against the Earth. With that warning in mind, we can begin to understand what the environmental crisis is and what it is not. Too often we look on ecological issues as affecting us only incidentally. The preservation of National Parks and Wilderness Areas is characterized in terms of monumental scenery, primitive outdoor recreation, or “watchable wildlife.”

But the truth is far different. Eco-catastrophe is not some remote possibility in the future. It is here now. We are currently embroiled in the greatest crisis in four billion years of life on Earth. Never before—not even 65 million years ago at the end of the Cretaceous when dinosaurs became extinct—has there been an extinction rate comparable to today’s. The world’s leading field ecologists warn us that one-third of all species living may become extinct in the next twenty or thirty years, that by the end of the century the only large mammals remaining will be those we humans choose to allow to exist.

Not only are we devastating biological diversity through habitat destruction, pollution, and slaughter of other species, but for the first time human beings are having a systemic impact on the life support system of Earth—through the destruction of the ozone layer, the greenhouse effect, acid precipitation, and worldwide radioactive and toxic pollution.

For over three and a half billion years, life has been blossoming, diversifying, and expanding into incredible forms and unimaginably complex relationships. And now, in the space of a human generation, we will truncate this flowering.

Human overpopulation and over-consumption lead to this unprecedented destruction of life. But it is caused most fundamentally by an idea—the idea that human beings are separate from and superior to the natural world. Gifford Pinchot,

the founder of the United States Forest Service, summarized it this way: There are only two things in the world—human beings and natural resources. We seem to believe the living Earth is a smorgasbord table, continually replenished by a magic kitchen, for the exclusive use of humans. That attitude is what is destroying life on Earth—including human beings.

Mere reform of industrial civilization will not suffice. Grappling with the ecological crisis requires a re-thinking of the role of humans within the life community. We must recognize with John Muir that all things are connected, that humans are only one of many millions of species that have been produced by evolution. We have no divine right to treat all other life as “resources” for our use. Other beings have value independent of their worth to humans; they live for their own sake.

On a practical level, this means that conservationists must no longer look on National Parks, Wilderness Areas, and other protective classifications as natural museums, outdoor gymnasiums, scenic art galleries—as islands of nature in a sea of development. We must rethink the role of Wilderness Areas and Parks, and consciously design them so they maintain and help restore biological diversity.

During the last decade, new conservation groups have sprung up like owl clover in the desert after a wet winter. These groups, ranging from the Society for Conservation Biology to the Association of Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics to the grassroots Alliance for

the Wild Rockies and Preserve Appalachian Wilderness, are working in a variety of ways for the preservation of natural diversity and the careful design of preserves to protect that diversity. Scenery and primitive recreation are incidental to their agenda. Traditional mainstream conservation groups like The Wilderness Society and Oregon Natural Resources Council are also replacing the old scenery and recreation arguments with those for biodiversity.

Wild Earth is being launched to encourage this new approach to wilderness preservation. Our magazine exists as a forum for the serious discussion of the ideas and methods of *ecological preservation*. We are here to help translate the theories and information of Conservation Biology into grassroots preservation activism. We are here to help all groups and individuals working to protect biological diversity.

In doing that, we will consciously be advocates for non-human nature. We will speak for wolf, Orca, Gila Monster, Saguaro.

If you like the talk and the company around this campfire, join us. Sit down and share your ideas. But if this campfire doesn’t feel like home to you, please look for another one. There are lots of good groups out there. *Wild Earth* is not for everyone. We are conservationists. We believe in wilderness for its own sake. With John Muir, we are on the side of the bears in the war industrial humans have declared against wild nature.

Happy Trails
Dave Foreman

Editor's Ramblings

Welcome to *Wild Earth*, a magazine for the real world. With this, our premier issue, we set the stage for the development of a North American Wilderness Recovery Strategy.

“Wait a minute ... why another environmental periodical?” some of you may wonder. Granted, a plethora of national environmental periodicals are now available, but very few are advocating *real wilderness*; very few are speaking for a truly wild Earth. Even the small minority of national environmental publications that focus on wilderness and biodiversity issues generally do not speak for real wilderness. The mainstream conservation groups and their publications are generally calling for small preserves (oxymorons). If there is

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The Need for Three Dimensional Wilderness Defense

by Bill McKibben

The battle to save wilderness and the species that need it has traditionally been fought on the ground—we've worried a great deal about the horizontal spread of wilderness and rather less about its vertical reach. This two-dimensional view of the situation has long and illustrious precedent. Henry David Thoreau, an early opponent of clear-cutting, said that soon the earth "would be so bald that every man would have to grow whiskers to hide its nakedness, but, thank God, the sky was safe." John Muir predicted that the sheep grazing Yosemite might destroy the forests—"only the sky will then be safe." When wilderness advocates *have* looked skyward, it's usually to protest localized and very visible problems—acid rain in the Northeast, the haze dimming the Grand Canyon.

The unwelcome news is that we no longer have this luxury—that the wild earth faces at least as large a threat from the changing atmosphere as from all the bulldozers and condo developers and miners and loggers combined. Everyone knows about the greenhouse effect, of course, but even most environmentalists have pushed it to second or third or fourth on their list of priorities as they've gone about preserving Utah or saving the Siskiyou. Now, new data are making it abundantly clear that this is a Saddam-like strategy—even if we could win the war for wilderness and biodiversity on the ground, we would likely lose it in the air.

Take, as an example, a study reported in the 16 November 1990 issue of *Science*. A team of Canadian researchers had been studying a set of remote lakes in northern Ontario for two decades. In that time the average temperature of the spot [the air and the lakes] had risen about 3.5 degrees Fahrenheit, with the following results:

- Decreased soil moisture and rainfall cut water flows into the lakes, quintupling the number of years it took to replenish their waters, from about 4 to about 20, and thereby increasing the concentrations of many chemicals.

- The reduced stream flows meant fewer organic particles entering the lakes. As a result, sunlight penetrated the clearer water to greater depths, warming it.

- Forest fires increased, stripping much of the area of cover. As a result, winds increased on the lakes, and these also drove the cold layers of the lakes deeper. As a result, Lake Trout and other cold-water species were threatened with extirpation from the region.

In other words, you could take these lakes and put them in the middle of a five-million-acre wilderness surrounded by a ten-million-acre buffer zone and only let in barefoot hikers who'd passed a test on the contents of *How to Shit in the Woods* and you'd still have an ecosystem savagely degraded by human intervention. This should not be much of a surprise (though the reporter who described the study in the *New York Times* wrote that "the effect of the warming has hardly been wholly benign, contrary to what might be expected in northern climes"). Since one of the chief defining characteristics of any ecosystem is its climate, any major change is absolutely certain to be disruptive.

These lakes will not be an exception—remember back to the hot North American summer of 1988 when ducks found dry potholes for nesting and fish turned belly-up in warm and shallow water. Think about the world's coral reefs, which are disappearing at as much as a five percent annual clip, apparently due to increased ocean temperature. If sea level rises a meter it will wipe out fifty percent of

coastal marshes. And so on and so on.

Biologists have identified a number of types of species at particular risk. Those that live at the poles, for instance, where temperature increases are likely to be sharper than at the equator. Or very specialized species, or species living near the tops of mountains—their climatic range will move right to the summit and then past. (Telescopes aren't the only enemy for the Mt. Graham Red Squirrel.) Even mobile, somewhat adaptive plants and animals will be in trouble, as they find their paths blocked by cities, highways, farms. It's as if we're playing planetary musical chairs and humans are sitting on almost all the remaining seats.

For good, well-adjusted anthropocentrists, this is no big deal. Scientists and policy makers routinely discuss who will be the "winners" and "losers" from climate change, concluding, for instance, that if temperatures don't rise too quickly Scandinavian sheep ranchers can expect more forage and thus more meat. The Canadian researchers suggested that once the Lake Trout were exterminated, bass might be stocked so that fishing guides could keep their jobs. The idea that we'll just adapt, no big deal, is likely delusional; but even if some humans do manage to exploit climate changes, the changes will be disastrous for other species.

I know that none of this comes as a great surprise to anyone reading it, and I hesitate to even suggest that wilderness advocates turn some of their precious attention skyward; but I see no alternative. The good news is, it's not a separate fight. The same cast of mind that destroys wilderness causes most our greenhouse trouble—in fact, the insistence on ease, consumption, convenience, comfort and, above all, growth, can be attacked closest to its roots in connection with carbon dioxide. Almost every action of a modern life burns fossil fuel; if that life changes to produce less CO₂, it will almost certainly do less harm

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in other ways too. Fewer Winnebagos mean fewer Burr Trails; fewer big houses mean (maybe) fewer clearcuts.

Also, the same sorts of tactics used effectively by wilderness and biodiversity advocates may help shake the greenhouse debate off the dead center it is stuck on in this country. GM is at least as vulnerable to boycotts, pickets, and sit-ins as Burger King or Starkist or Maxxam, and their insistence on producing 25 mile-per-gallon cars is every ounce as destructive. Coal-fired power plants, companies that use energy to produce needless goods, legislatures in the thrall of lobbyists—all classic targets for civil disobedience.

I don't mean to complicate anyone's agenda—only to suggest that the laws of physics and chemistry have already complicated it. We need to have our feet firmly on the ground; unfortunately, we also need to have our heads in the clouds.

Bill McKibben is a widely acclaimed writer, whose book The End of Nature has been compared with Rachel Carson's classic Silent Spring. Countless periodicals have reviewed The End of Nature, with reviews tending to fall into two camps: glowing reviews by persons able to overcome their anthropocentric biases; condescending reviews by persons inextricably wedded to anthropocentric ideologies. Bill is currently writing a book about TV's devastating effects on culture and Nature, and is a Wild Earth editorial advisor.

science editor's note: So far the threat of a changing atmosphere at a global scale is probable, but not yet as big a problem as habitat alteration, either for terrestrial or aquatic ecosystems. Nonetheless, if the global circulation models are correct, the atmosphere is in a trajectory toward warming that is too late to reverse even by stopping fossil fuel use. Limiting CO₂ production will reduce the intensity and duration of warming, but probably won't stop it. Furthermore, if warming is as rapid as predicted, most organisms won't be able to migrate quickly enough. At particular risk will be species with narrow physiological tolerances of environmental conditions, and species with limited dispersal abilities. Species translocation and other interventionist approaches will be necessary to prevent major losses of biodiversity. Personally, I only hope the models are wrong! —RN

LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

Dear John,

In organizing demonstrations on wild-life & wilderness issues this summer in New York, I became increasingly aware of the trend toward linking the "radical" environmental movement to issues of social justice worldwide. I don't for a moment dispute the need for these issues to be addressed. My parents and my grandparents before me worked hard and took serious personal risks on behalf of the same social issues that some activists think we should now commit to.

I have been told time and time again that we cannot save (for example) the rainforests until we have provided adequate educational and living standards for all the people who live in those rainforests. I have also been told that it is arrogant for us to expect people to reduce their birth rates, let alone their current populations, until they have living standards like those in the US or Western Europe. I have been told that, historically, it is only after such living standards have been achieved that any people has had the "luxury" of worrying about other species. All of these arguments have merit.

My concern is whether every group needs to address every possible issue. If we all start trying to do so, then the purpose of each group is spread so thin that its "message" becomes muddy, befuddled. If we take that course then we fall into the marketing nightmare of the television networks—if you try to be all things to all people, you end up being not much of anything to anybody.

When I organized demonstrations this summer, I tried to be clear about the issue (not issues) involved; you really can't do two things well at the same time. Anyone who has ever tried to leaflet on the street knows that you must not try to explain two issues at once. People can't listen to you indefinitely, and won't listen to you at all if your message isn't clear.

If anyone doubts this, I suggest they try it out. Go out on the street with two different messages on the same flyer or

petition, and see what happens. Go out with flyers on the sea turtle slaughter and the killing of dolphins for tuna. Or go out with messages on high-tech hunting and Animal Damage Control. People will listen to you on the first issue and many will support you, but when you to hit them up for a second issue, they get frustrated and disgusted. They know they can't do everything at once. And they're right. Neither can we.

A good and wise friend of mine (who just turned 75) keeps telling me: "You can't dance at all the weddings." He's right. It's not that I don't want to, or that I don't try to ... I do. But ultimately you can't. You can "dance" at one "wedding" at a time, but you can't "dance" at them all. If we follow the advice of those who wish us to "do" all the issues, we won't end up doing anything at all.

Groups working for social justice have been around for a long time. People are used to these groups—they are a "known quantity." Such groups don't really bother anybody; they can be "pigeonholed."

But any group that says, effectively, that "the Industrial Revolution was a terrible mistake, and it must be undone," and also says that "all species of life have an equal right to exist," is saying something new. Such a group would be far more threatening to our Society than any "social issues" group could be.

Actually "Saving the Planet" is an expensive proposition, culturally, socially, and financially. And it is a whole new concept. For one thing, we have to figure out who we are "saving" it for, and whom we are "saving" it from. To do it, we have to redefine our concept of human beings, and our concept of what our species has the right to do. It might mean having to share the world with other species on an equal basis. That is a new idea. And it is a very threatening idea to many people.

But if we abandon these ideas, we become less threatening. If we adopt a "social agenda," as many people seem to want us to do, we must change our focus, and accept a more human-centered mandate. When we do this, two things happen:

First, we become identifiable as "leftists," we become part of a movement whose goals are familiar and "safe": nothing new is being said. This is probably more

comfortable for many people: we can continue to live as we have, and make the same basic arguments for social justice that have been made for several centuries. What we thought for a moment was a frightening new situation that we didn't know how to deal with, is now no more than a new way of talking about the old, familiar problems that we all understand. We don't need any new ideas—we're just working the same old turf in a new "green" dress.

Second, time passes. While we spend our time on our "new" social agenda, we do not have to worry about the rights of species who are even more "homeless" than

our "homeless." *To ask for the equal valuation of all species is to ask for a lot.* To ask our species to accept that other animals are "people" too, is to question a lot of the things we think we "know." It requires a new understanding of what "life" on this planet is.

In conventional terms, that will be "expensive." If other animals' lives are "worth" as much as ours, then *maybe we can't just "take" what we want.* Such an idea could seriously disrupt our Society. Do the folks who want us to "*Save Humans First*" intend, perhaps, to distract us from addressing these concerns?

HOUSEKEEPING

Heartfelt thanks from the magazine staff to our subscribers, who enabled us to begin publication of *Wild Earth*. The publisher of a prominent environmental periodical recently noted with pride that his magazine began "on less than \$250,000," including a sizeable loan. *Wild Earth* has started on less than one twentieth of that; and, apart from a small subsidy from the *Earth First! Journal*, almost every dollar has come from subscribers, through subscriptions and donations. All made a leap of faith in sending us money, before we even had a publication date. We are grateful for your confidence in us and for your generosity.

The Wilderness Covenant Foundation is setting up a fund to receive future donations to *Wild Earth* from people who want their gifts to be tax deductible. Checks should be made payable to Wilderness Covenant Foundation, but should bear a notation that they are for *Wild Earth*. Send to: Wilderness Covenant Foundation, c/o 3757 N. El Moraga, Tucson, AZ 85745. Donations can also be made directly to the magazine. At present we are operating on the proverbial shoestring. We believe that subscriptions will increase sufficiently to cover future bare-bones publication costs. However, donations are most welcome, as shoestring management does not make for a high-quality magazine over the long haul.

Wild Earth does not plan to sell any merchandise except postcards. The cards, which will be printed on recycled stock and have one side plain for writing, will help publicize *Wild Earth*.

Dave Foreman acquired the *Earth First!* Bookstore and renamed it Dave

Foreman's Wilderness Bookshelf. Books advertised in the November *Earth First! Journal* as well as new titles, maps, and some trinkets are available from the Bookshelf. Dave will distribute a catalog two or three times a year. If you do not receive a copy of the first issue by mid-May and want one, send a postcard to Ned Ludd Books, POB 5141, Tucson, AZ 85703.

As to subscriptions, *Wild Earth* has eliminated the choice of first class or bulk mail that *Earth First! Journal* offered. We hope to mail all copies of the magazine relatively speedily by obtaining a second-class mail permit.

To simplify record keeping, we have entered all new subscriptions received prior to the first issue as having a January 1992 expiration date, no matter when the check arrived. The fourth and final issue of the first volume will be mailed well before the end of January.

If the expiration date of an *Earth First! Journal* subscription that you passed on to us is January, February, or March, 1991, you need to resubscribe to receive our second issue. The third issue will automatically go to subscribers with expiration dates of July or later; the cutoff for the fourth issue will be October. That said, early renewals are welcome.

One final, practical note: we need a logo. We welcome submissions of possible designs and hope to be able to choose a logo from among them before publication of the second issue in June. The creator of the winning design will receive a lifetime subscription to *Wild Earth*.

—Mary Byrd Davis, Publisher

Is there some reason that the energy of this movement must be siphoned off into "left" vs. "right" debates that don't have any meaning for any species but our own? Whose interests would such a diversion really serve? Is it that what we have been proposing is so new and so scary that it must be sidetracked at any cost? These are questions that have been bothering me.

Should we abandon the protection of other species until all human problems have been solved? Perhaps. Many groups are now doing just that.

The concept of what comes "First!" is essential. And so is the issue of Compromise. And the purpose of the endeavor is Defense. Intentional, determined, inventive, creative, relentless, systematic and effective Defense. The Earth needs this kind of defense. It needs defense from us, from our *species*. And it needs defenders; it needs defenders who realize that we must make no further "compromise" in our own favor.

We are in the process of evolving (if we have enough time) a new way of thinking about things. Obviously that is difficult, but it is the most important thing we can do. The other most important thing we can do is to spread the word. We need to get as many people as possible off the couch, and into action. Whatever action they can think up.

We are the legatees of a wonderful movement, started by some very visionary and brave people, who saw what our species is doing to this place, and were willing to do whatever it takes to stop it.

10 years have passed. More people have become involved on behalf of the other folks (the non-humans, etc.) who live here with us. We have now been offered a challenge: do we do what we set out to do, or do we do what most (human) people want us to do? Are we going to be reasonable, or are we going to change the way our species lives? Do we want to spend our time being self-consciously "radical," or do we actually want to change things? I say we change things.

—Margaret Hays Young

Wild Earth readers:

I am an attorney in Santa Fe, New Mexico who would like to do more to support you. I would like to provide you with a discount on my legal fees and also donate a portion of my legal fees from your cases to the new *Wild Earth* publication and other eco-warrior causes—like the Arizona Four Defense Fund.

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