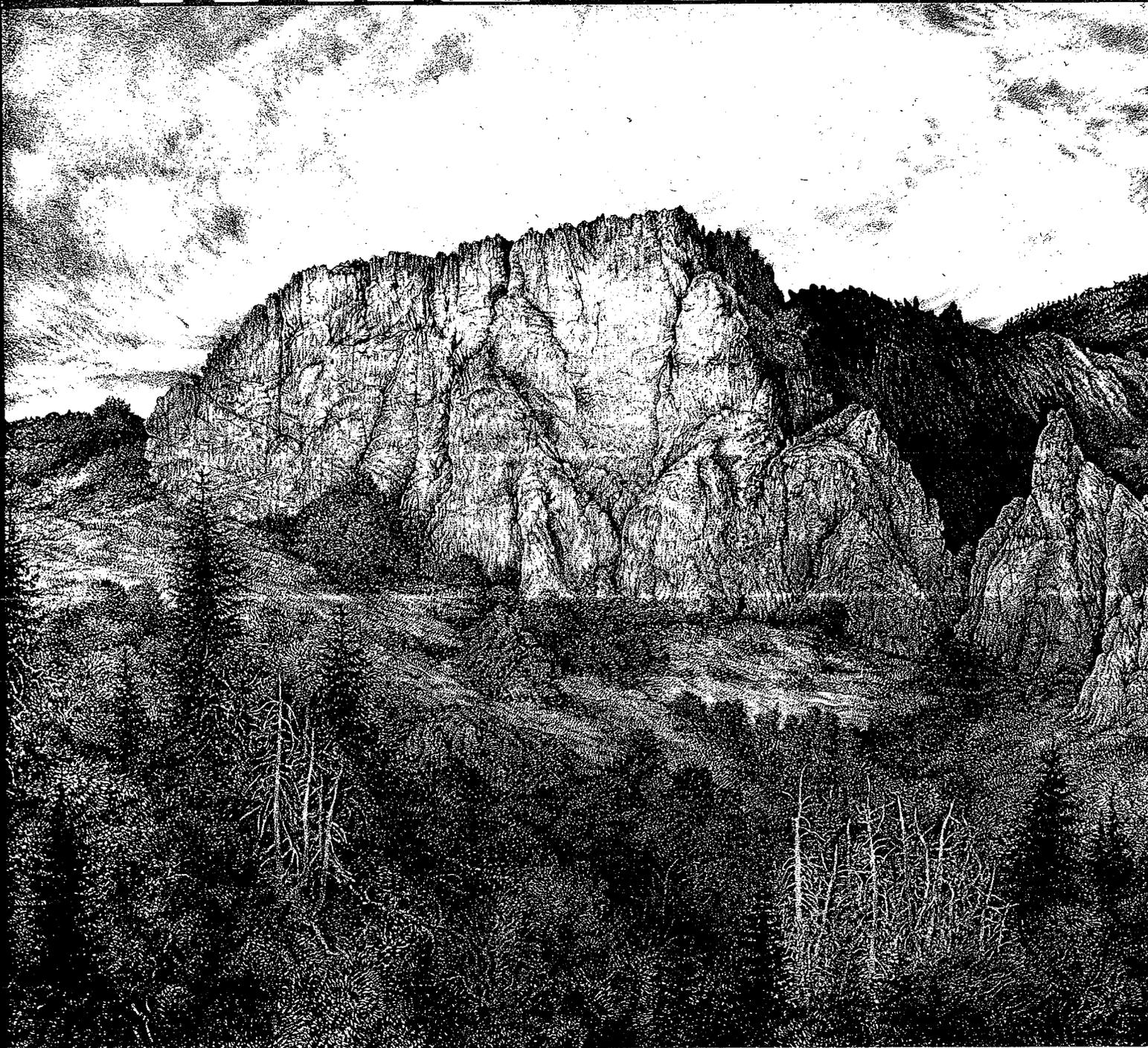
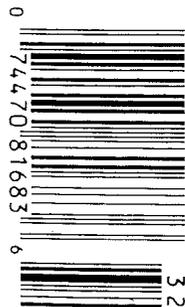


WILDEARTH



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DOUG PEACOCK BLASTS BISON KILLERS

Hugh Iltis Challenges Biologists
Dave Foreman Challenges Abiologists
Threatened Eastern Old Growth
Fire in Parks

Around the Campfire

In the winter 1996/97 issue of *Wild Earth*, I wrote about "All Kinds of Wilderness Foes." In the Wild Earth Forum this issue you will find very thoughtful letters disagreeing with parts of that Campfire from Wendell Berry, Bill McLarney, and David

Rothenberg. I welcome their comments and take them to heart. Part of the reason for their disagreement with what I wrote is because what I wrote was a severely compressed summary of my book-in-progress, *The War on Nature*. Part of their disagreement is because...well, because we really do disagree on some points.

Here, I'd like to expand on my thoughts about how immaturity in adult humans and a disbelief in biology lead people to war on Nature. In doing so, I hope to show a few of the psychological and anthropological reasons why many people think they can live without wild things, some of whom go so far in their alienation from Nature that they want to bring to heel wild things and kill those wild things that will not heel.

IMMATURITY

In *Nature and Madness*, Paul Shepherd hacks his way through the weedy thickets of human psychohistory to ask "why do men persist in destroying their habitat?" As he searches, he finds that "[a]n uncanny something seems to block the corrective will, not simply private cupidity or political inertia." That "uncanny something" is that "[m]ost of us fail to become as mature as we might."¹

Homo sapiens is a neotonic species. Neotony means one retains immature characteristics in adulthood. Adult humans look like juvenile apes. But the immaturity that drives our war on Nature comes from the "progress" of civilization. Shepard tells us, "Agriculture not only infantilized animals by domestication, but exploited the infantile human traits of the normal individual neotony." The result was "childish adults."² We moderns seem frozen in the destructive impulses of preadolescence.

¹ Shepard, Paul *Nature and Madness*. Sierra Club Books, San Francisco, CA 1982. pg. 1-5-

² Ibid. pg. 113-124



About *Wild Earth* and *The Wildlands Project*

Wild Earth (POB 455, Richmond, VT 05477; 802-434-4077) is a quarterly journal melding conservation biology and wildlands activism. Our efforts to strengthen the conservation movement involve the following:

- We serve as the publishing wing of The Wildlands Project.
- We provide a forum for the many effective but little-known regional wilderness groups and coalitions in North America, and serve as a networking tool for wilderness activists.
- We make the teachings of conservation biology accessible to non-scientists, that activists may employ them in defense of biodiversity.
- We expose threats to habitat and wildlife.
- We facilitate discussion on ways to end and reverse the human population explosion.
- We defend wilderness both as *concept* and as *place*.

Wild Earth and The Wildlands Project are closely allied but independent non-profit organizations dedicated to the restoration and protection of wilderness and biodiversity. We share a vision of an ecologically healthy North America—with adequate habitat for all native species, containing vibrant human and natural communities.

The Wildlands Project (1955 W Grant Rd., Suite 148A, Tucson, AZ 85745; 520-884-0875) is the organization guiding the design of a continental wilderness recovery strategy. Through advocacy, education, scientific consultation, and cooperation with many regional groups, The Wildlands Project is drafting a blueprint for an interconnected, continental-scale system of protected wildlands linked by habitat corridors.



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The overblown manliness of Old Testament herders is a trait of childishness rife in American culture today. Shepard says that in *The Melancholy Herd*,³ "[Lewis] Lapham portrays our aristocratic desert-mindedness as a catalog of childishness, a sort of amalgam of teenybopper frothiness and macho juvenile vapidness..." Shepard goes on to say, "Yet the similarity of Americans to mandarin Bedouins is neither accidental nor due to direct cultural heritage. It incorporates that body of adolescent traits and pastoral attitudes first assimilated into Western consciousness by Hebrew prophets and later reworked and secularized by Greek philosophers and modern Protestants. It is dominated by themes of alienation, disengagement, and unrelatedness—hence chaos."⁴

The intellectualism of Classical Greece made us even more immature than the loin-girded desert patriarchs: "[T]he 'maturity' of Periclean Greece seems typical of an immature personality. Of the Platonic ideal of neuter human relationships and pederasty linked to pedagogy, [Joseph] Campbell exclaims, 'Everything that we read of it has a wonderful adolescent atmosphere of opalescent, timeless skies—untouched by the vulgar seriousness of a heterosexual commitment to mere life.'

"In most of the myths of creation of an androgynous ancestor, there is a paradisiacal sexlessness or infantile autosexuality that is unmistakably puerile."⁵ Hmm. Almost sounds like the otherworldly computer nerds of "Heaven's Gate."

The consequences of our failed maturity are all about us. Shepard warns, "the only society more frightful than one run by children, as in Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, might be one run by childish adults."⁶

If alienation from Nature comes from civilized immaturity, so does our hatred of limits. Setting limits underlies both maturity and conservation. Shepard again: "To be fully mature, as Rollo May says, is to understand and to affirm limitations."⁷

Many wilderness foes seem trapped in a two-year-old's sense of freedom. *All revolves around me. There are no limits. Actions have no consequences.* Maturity, on the other hand, means responsibility. Conservationists believe that there are limits in Nature (carrying capacity), which require us to act responsibly. Wilderness foes bristle at any sense of limits and thus rebuff pleas from society to behave responsibly toward Nature.

This American rejection of limits tracks back to the beginnings of English colonialism in North America. After the scarcity of Europe and faced with mind-boggling resource abundance in the sea and forest, the first settlers in Massachusetts and Virginia hatched the *Myth of Superabundance*. From the board rooms to the woods, from the economics departments to the Congress, this age-old faith holds sway. "There are no limits. Why should we worry about the consequences of our actions?"

³ Lapham, Lewis H. "The Melancholy Herd," *Harper's* July 1978

⁴ *Nature and Madness* pg. 69-70

⁵ *Ibid.*, pg. 79

⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 17

⁷ *Ibid.*, pg. 13

Around the Campfire

ABILOGISM

As I noted in my winter Campfire, another shared trait of wilderness foes is *abiologism*—a disbelief in biology. Wilderness foes (whether active destroyers of Nature or those who merely see wilderness preservation as irrelevant) do not accept the reality of evolution, the basic biological kinship of all living things, including humans.

Harvard evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould tells us that Sigmund Freud wisely noted, "Humanity has...had to endure...great outrages upon its naive self-love." Freud identified the two most important such outrages: the cosmological shift from a

geocentric to a heliocentric universe and Darwin's discovery of evolution, which "robbed man of his particular privilege of having been specially created, and relegated him to descent from the animal world."

But, Gould says, evolution "has not been able to surmount a mental roadblock. Evolution still floats in the limbo of our unwillingness to face the implications of Darwinism for the cosmic estate of *Homo sapiens*. Physical reconstruction, the first step in a Freudian revolution, has been accomplished: All thinking people accept the biological fact of our 'descent from the animal world.' But the second stage, mental accommodation toward pedestal smashing, has scarcely begun. Public perception of evolution has been so spin doctored that we have managed to retain an interpretation of human importance scarcely different, in many crucial ways, from the exalted state we occupied as the supposed products of direct creation in God's image." The reason for this is because no "other ideological revolution in the history of science has ever so strongly or directly impacted our view of our own meaning and purpose."⁸

To reiterate what I noted in the winter issue, the Christian right urges humans to transcend biology through supernaturalism and special creation; free-market zealots lift humans above biology with Smith's invisible hand; secular humanists free *Homo sapiens* from ecological constraints through the "second nature" of human culture; and postmodern deconstructionists can tell us that Nature is all in our heads because they emotionally do not believe in biology.

It's not so hard to understand abiologism among the uneducated; it's a bit tougher among the intelligentsia. But it is there, as Gould shows. Rutgers biologist David Ehrenfeld tells us, "There is...a strong anti-Nature (at least raw Nature) element in humanism, although it is not always expressed and is sometimes denied."⁹

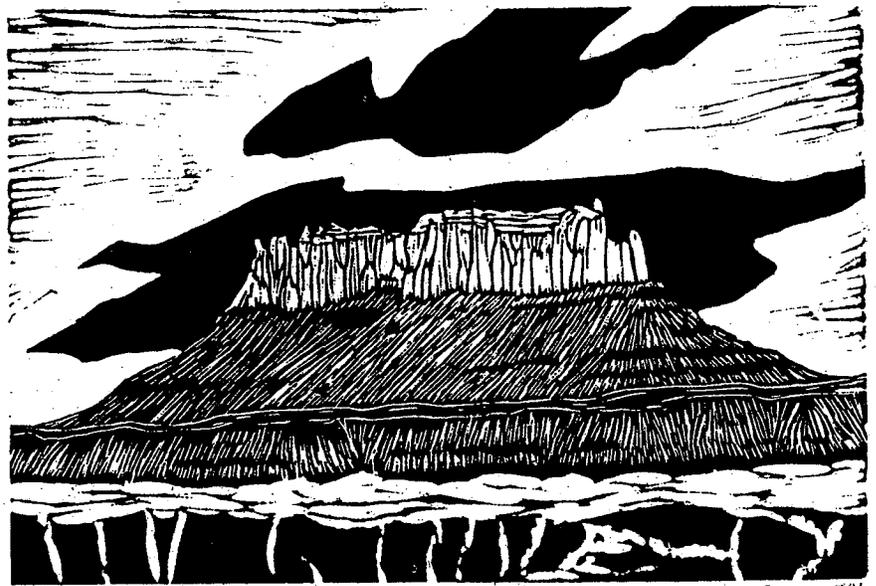
Rejecting biology for humans, wilderness foes cannot find value in Nature—and so find it easy to trash wilderness and other species.

It seems to me that the immaturity of modern humans resulting from agriculture, pastoralism, and industrialization, and our emotional rejection of biology are the reasons for the duality that exists between humans and Nature. Wilderness Areas, the idea of wilderness, and the need of many of us to escape periodically to wilderness are the best ways we have found to break down that duality and become biological once again. ■

Happy Trails,

—Dave Foreman

The Grand Canyon



Amy Grogan 1976

⁸ Gould, Stephen Jay "This View of Life" *Natural History* July 1995

⁹ Ehrenfeld, David *The Arrogance of Humanism*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK 1978. p. 6



Wild Earth Update

Wild Earth wishes to give special thanks in this issue to the Society for Conservation Biology. SCB continues to be the leading scientific society in efforts to better understand and protect biological diversity. Moreover, this year SCB is being exceptionally gracious to *Wild Earth* in honoring us with a distinguished service award for education and journalism. In early June, I'll attend the 1997 SCB meeting in Victoria, British Columbia, and there proudly accept this award on behalf of all the writers, reviewers, staff and board members, and friends who make *Wild Earth* a strong and growing link between the conservation biology community and wildland activism community. More good news from SCB includes the choice of Gary Meffe, of Savannah River Ecological Laboratory and author of a definitive text on conservation biology, to succeed outgoing editor Reed Noss at the helm of *Conservation Biology*; the election of Reed (ongoing *WE* science editor, too, of course) to be president of SCB; and the election of Greater Laurentian wildlands scientist Steve Trombulak to SCB's board of governors.

We also wish to thank the extremely generous readers who responded to our appeal last issue for contributions to help complete a wildlife corridor in the eastern Adirondacks. The protection work is proceeding slowly but surely. Please call or write us if you'd like information on this exciting conservation opportunity.

In this issue of *Wild Earth* and the next we pay special attention to original ecosystems. It bears repeating that old-growth remnants—the seeds of recovery—in the East (see article by Mary Byrd Davis) and Northwest (Andy Kerr & Rick Brown) are still being cut; that natural disturbance regimes are still being suppressed (Robert H. Jones); that many whole ecosystems are imperiled (Reed Noss); and that even some of our continent's original denizens that we might assume are being treated with veneration, such as Bison (Doug Peacock) and Tui Chubs (Tom Myers), are still being persecuted. Our winter 97-98 issue will explore one of the root causes of this destruction, human overpopulation.

An exceptionally cool wet spring with brisk northwest winds here in the Adirondacks and Vermont (if any weather in the climatically diverse Northeast can be considered exceptional) is whispering of exciting change, growth, and migration (some of which Monique reports below) here at *Wild Earth*. As the calm of summer settles upon us, we'll duly note these range expansions for your perusal in our fall issue. Meanwhile, thanks as always for your comments, encouragement, and contributions.

—John Davis, Hemlock Rock Wildlife Sanctuary, eve of warblers' return

With the arrival of spring wildflowers and returning warblers have come exciting changes at *Wild Earth*. With gratitude we say farewell to business manager Suzanne DeJohn, who leaves us to begin full-time work at the National Gardening Association. We welcome as the newest Wild Earthling incoming business manager Andrea Beenhouwer.

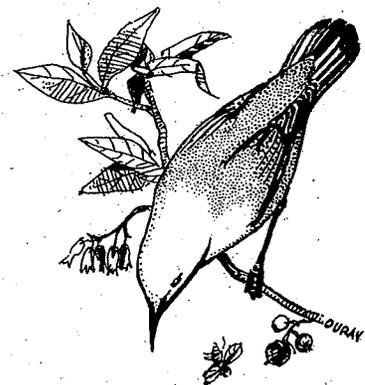
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Wild Earth has long distinguished itself both editorially and by its unique role in the conservation movement. But other facets of this organization may have escaped notice by even some of our most devoted subscribers. I refer in particular to *WE*'s policy since its inception seven years ago, not to a) trade, barter, or sell its mailing list, and b) send more than one fundraising mailing to members per year. Most professional promoters would dismiss such policies as being hopelessly naive. We hope you disagree.

Your generous response to our annual appeal last year confirmed for us that we should maintain these policies, while working vigorously to attract more people to the cause of wildlands restoration and protection. One promotional idea we believe worthwhile is providing a business reply envelope bound into the pages of *Wild Earth* beginning with this issue, allowing you to subscribe, renew, or order gift subscriptions and other publications with ease. The envelope also contains a section asking for the names of friends and family who might be interested in learning more about *Wild Earth*—we hope you will use it!

If you support our policy of not selling our mailing list and refusing to flood subscribers with direct mail solicitations, please let us know—checks are welcome, but so are letters! Your enthusiastic support of our work sustains our efforts.

—Monique Miller



Prothonotary Warbler by Chuck Ouray

