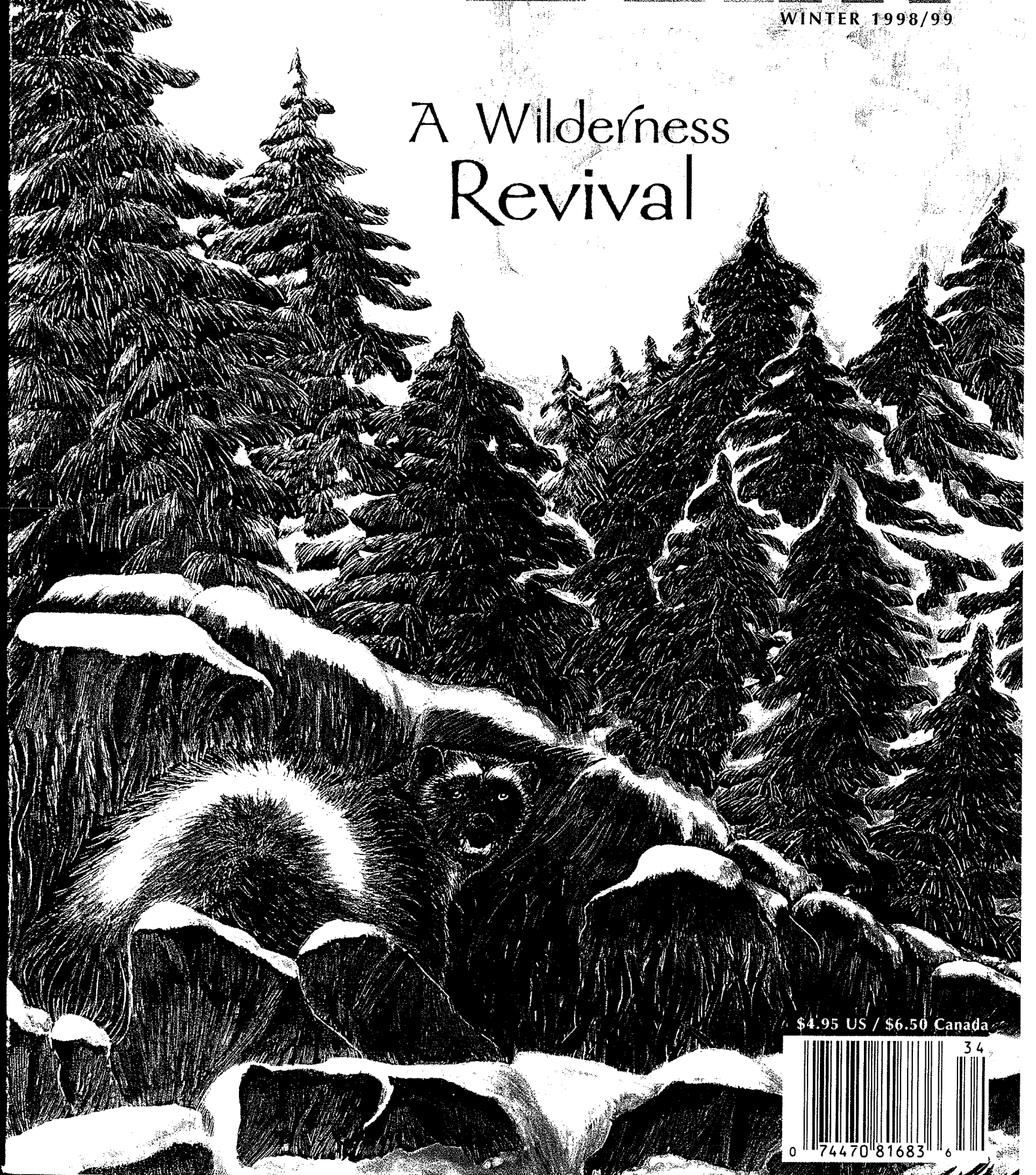




# EARTH

WINTER 1998/99

## A Wilderness Revival

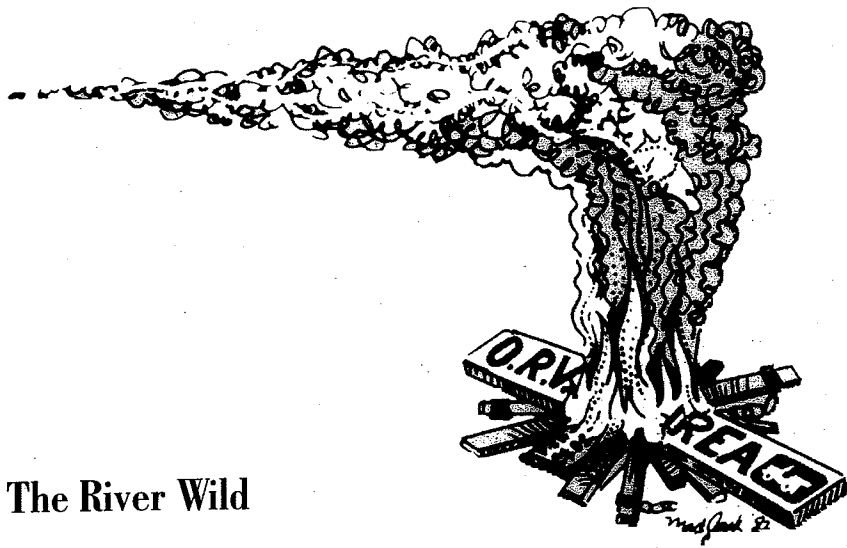


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# Around the Campfire

by Dave Foreman



## The River Wild

This issue of *Wild Earth* is a sweeping "NO!" to social scientists and others who proclaim the wilderness idea dead or mortally wounded. Across the United States and Canada we see a revival of Wilderness Area designation campaigns. I believe these campaigns are a key to fulfilling the goals of The Wildlands Project—to protect and restore the biological richness of North America.

In "Rewilding and Biodiversity: Complementary Goals for Continental Conservation" (fall 1998 *Wild Earth*), Michael Soulé and Reed Noss clearly show that science-based Nature reserve design does not come to bury traditional Wilderness Area designation, but to marry it. To see how this is so, we need both a lookout that takes in the whole conservation movement and a metaphor that can limn it.

The metaphor I use for the conservation movement is that of a river's watershed, with streams dropping off high saddles and cirques and flowing down to mix as currents in the river. A good perspective from which to ken this watershed is that of an eagle, where we can see it all spread out before us. Soulé and Noss touched on this metaphor of currents in the conservation stream; I'd like to fill it out here.

The headwater streams that flow together to make the River Wild are wildlife protection, stewardship, beauty, and forest protection. Down-river, the streams of wilderness, ecosystem representation, carnivore protection, and connectivity flow in. Nearby, but apart, are watersheds for the rivers of resourcism and environmentalism. Some of the headwaters of the Resourcism River come off the same ridges and peaks as those that feed the River Wild, but they flow in a different direction. The Environmental River does not spring from the same divides as the River Wild, but its course later runs parallel to the River Wild with only a low ridge between the two.

From the farthest mountain pass flows the sturdy stream of Wildlife Protection. Contrary to common wisdom, American conservation began with wildlife. English aristocrat William Henry Herbert came to America in 1831 and brought with him the "code of the sportsman." In his woodsy role as "Frank Forester," Herbert fought the

continued on page 2

## About Wild Earth and The Wildlands Project



**Wild Earth** 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.



**The Wildlands Project** 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.

*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.

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era's rapacious market hunting and spurred sportsmen to band together to fight game hogs. National hunting magazines began publishing in the 1870s, and they joined the battle against commercial exploitation of game and fish. Sport hunters and their magazines raised a din against the senseless slaughter of the buffalo. The first national conservation group was not the Sierra Club (founded in 1892), but the Boone and Crockett Club founded in 1887 by Theodore Roosevelt and his fellow hunters. The role of Boone and Crockett in creating the first National Parks, wildlife refuges, and forest reserves has generally been overlooked by historians as well as by today's conservationists.<sup>1</sup>

The second headwater stream is that of Stewardship. One of the most remarkable Americans of the 19th century was Vermont's George Perkins Marsh. As Lincoln's ambassador to Turkey and later Italy, Marsh took in the sights of the Mediterranean, where among the ruins of classical civilizations he found ruins of

### The headwater streams that flow together to make the River Wild are Down-river, the streams of wilderness, ecosystem

the land. The rocky, treeless hills of Greece were as much a testament to a fallen civilization as was the crumbling Acropolis. His 1864 book, *Man and Nature; or, Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action*, is one of the benchmarks of both history and science. He wrote, "But man is everywhere a disturbing agent. Wherever he plants his foot, the harmonies of nature are turned to discord." Former *New York Times* foreign correspondent and then environmental reporter Philip Shabecoff writes, "Marsh was the first to demonstrate that the cumulative impact of human activity was not negligible and, far from benign, could wreak widespread, permanent destruction on the face of the earth."<sup>2</sup>

The third headwater stream is Beauty (Monumentalism)—protection of National Parks because of their spectacular, inspiring qualities. Yosemite Valley in the Sierra Nevada of California was not discovered by whites until 1851 and the mighty sequoias near it were not described until 1852. Within a few years both were already attracting visitors who wanted to see their splendor. In 1859, Horace Greeley, editor of the *New York Tribune*, visited the Yosemite and wrote to his readers that it was "the most unique and majestic of nature's marvels."<sup>3</sup> Five years later, on June 30, 1864, taking time from the burden of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln signed a bill transferring the monumental natural wonders of Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove of sequoias to the state of California as a public park. Yellowstone and the other early National Parks were also set aside primarily because of beauty.

The fourth and final headwater stream is that of Forest Protection. It falls out of a cirque-held tarn, but cascades only briefly before a great sharp ridge splits the stream. One side pours off into the Resourcism River with Gifford Pinchot and the

1. Reiger, John F., "The Sportsman Factor in Early Conservation," in Nash, Roderick Frasier, ed. *American Environmentalism: Readings in Conservation History* (McGraw-Hill Publishing Co., New York, 1990) p. 52-58.  
2. Shabecoff, Philip, *A Fierce Green Fire: The American Environmental Movement* (Hill and Wang, New York, 1993) p. 55-59.  
3. Runte, Alfred, *National Parks: The American Experience, Second Edition Revised* (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1987) p. 19-20.

