

★ Irreplaceable: The Fight to Save Our Wild Places

Julian Hoffman

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Julian Hoffman's *Irreplaceable* chronicles singular landscapes and the inspiring people who fight to protect them. It's an eloquent, sustained prose poem about the beauty and historical, cultural, and ecological attributes of special areas, and is evocative because of its gorgeous, passionate writing.

Though he explores the accelerating loss of biological diversity and habitats, Hoffman's tone is not elegiac, but rather defiant and resolute: "I wrote this book in the hope that we can seize that determination, spirit and resolve to hold on to the irreplaceable." Whether considering southern England's fecund Hoo Peninsula, threatened by airport and housing schemes, or North Macedonian lynxes imperiled by poaching, poisoning, and roadways, the book often returns to a call to recalibrate our consumption, social morals, and antiquated views about nature as an inexhaustible resource to commodify and conquer.

Some of the places that Hoffman describes are not pristine wildernesses, but are still irreplaceable because of other values. Take Smithy Wood near Sheffield, used and nurtured as a woodlot and green space for centuries; or witness vibrant abandoned quarries and military training grounds that house astonishing varieties of insect and plant life (some previously thought extinct) in the absence of human disturbance.

While there are aching defeats for some of Hoffman's irreplaceables, they are balanced by the successes of others and by his positive belief in sustained and networked citizen action, bolstered by the rise of social media and public awareness about climate change, pollution, and species extinction. The book touches upon the structural and policy changes needed within the environmental movement, from the inclusion of views and needs of Indigenous people to expanding support for species other than totemic big mammals.

Irreplaceable is an inspiring, thoughtful book that can help recharge one's batteries for all the good fights ahead.

RACHEL JAGARESKI (May / June 2020)

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